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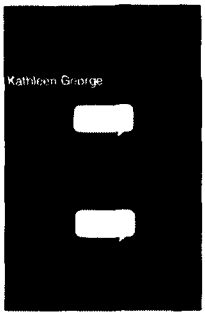

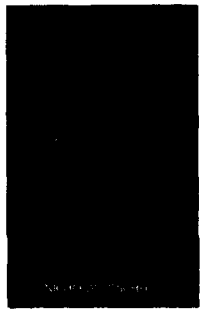

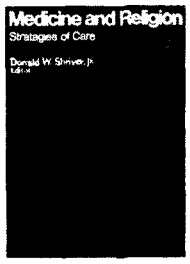

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The End of Moviegoing

ARISTIDES

The tensest moment at the movies nowadays rarely takes place on the screen or even while the movie is being shown. No, tension is greatest between showings, at that moment when the people who have seen the movie are leaving the theater and the people who are about to see it are still waiting behind the thick velour cordon. There they scrutinize the faces of those on the way out for clues to whether the movie has evoked satisfaction or apathy, pleasure or anger, delight or rage. The problem is that going to the movies today one doesn't really know with any certainty what one is getting into. One may have read reviews of a particular movie, had friends extol its many splendors, but neither of these is quite so trustworthy as the pure physical reaction of those who have seen it only a moment before—or what I think of as "word of face."

I know that, when behind the cordon, I look for word of face. And when I emerge from a movie I try to arrange my own wrinkles, pouches, jowls, and dewlaps into an appropriate critical statement. To word of face I sometimes add word of mouth. "Don't worry," I have been heard to say, "it's not that bad." Or "A fine flick." Or, more often these days, "God-awful, hideous, and terrible." Of course these little reviews come too late, for the people behind the cordon have already bought their tickets. Yet when departing especially bad movies, I have been known to approach people at the box office, advising them to return home, to give their ticket money to the Salvation Army instead, to cut and run while there is still time. Usually, I regret to report, to no avail. Most people are not susceptible to sound advice, particularly from a raving stranger, but seem to need to see truly dreary movies for themselves.

No wrath like that of a lover spurned—and because I count myself a lover of movies, when they spurn me by bringing forth inferior goods I tend to show my wrath. Wrath expressed gives pleasure of a sort, though I should much prefer the more substantial pleasure of a good movie. But this is a pleasure I find in shorter and shorter supply. Whereas once I was at least a movie-a-week moviegoer, I now see, apart from movies shown on television, six or eight or at most ten movies a year. Sweet but unserious music, elegant food, lovely movies—these are among the shaded water holes in the desert of life; and now one of them, the movies, is being dried up. I find myself filled with resentment.

As a member of the last generation in America to grow up without television, I am, in the nature of the case, a movie man. If there were any Saturdays when I was growing up in the 1940s on which I did not go to the movies, I do not remember them. I remember going to the movies in the evenings with my father, especially on hot summer nights in the age before air-conditioning. I am old enough to remember when they gave away dishes at the movies, when certain neighborhood theaters had double seats for lovers, when downtown theaters combined movies with stage shows. If you don't remember any of these things, then, dearie, you're much younger than I.

I remember, too, going to the movies during those years without even bothering to ask what was showing. One might enter a movie somewhere in its middle, sit through the rest of it, then stay up to the point at which one had entered. It didn't seem a bad thing to do then, though now, for some reason, it does. At half price, movies for children cost twenty cents, at some places a quarter, but one of the theaters in our neighborhood, the Coed, charged

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only eleven cents. Another, the Bertha, specialized in children's matinees, which usually meant cowboy movies, eight or ten cartoons, a serial or two, and charged only a dime. There were no ratings, no X, R, PG, G, et cetera. I do, though, recall being turned away from another neighborhood movie theater, The 400, when it showed *The Best Years of Our Lives*, which was considered adult fare because it had, as I have since learned from seeing it, an almost anti-aphrodisiac bedroom scene.

Mention of the name 400, modest little theater though it was, reminds me of the grand names movie houses of those days carried. None of the current Cinema I, II, and III. Exotic place-names were a specialty in the city where I grew up: the Riviera, the Tivoli, the Valencia, the Oriental, the Granada. Moorish names, many of them, and Moorish names got Moorish settings: turrets and minarets, sculptures and tapestries, and kilometers of fake Oriental rugs. The interiors of many of these theaters made Hearst's San Simeon look like an attached house in Astoria. The Granada, a theater that in its design was two or three jumps beyond rococo and seemed slightly larger than the country of Liechtenstein, had a vast blue ceiling in which light bulbs, starlike, blinked on and off. It was all, in the word of Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy*, "Aladdinish."

As a boy of impressionable years, nothing impressed me more than the movies. After seeing a movie I would generally change my hair style. One Saturday evening I would pomade it heavily à la Clark Gable; another I would attempt a pompadour à la Van Johnson. My pals and I would swing through the trees of empty lots in imitation of Errol Flynn as Robin Hood; and once, after seeing a movie with a medieval setting, we mounted our bicycles, tore off fairly large tree limbs, and jousted. How we avoided a maiming I do not know.

From the movies of those days I acquired a rich mine of misinformation. For a very long time, for example, I believed that the United States was a Catholic country; this was a result of the large number of movies—*The Bells of St. Mary's, Going My Way, Boys' Town, The Keys of the Kingdom*—in which Bing Crosby, Spencer Tracy, Pat O'Brien, or Gregory Peck played a priest. Riding the buses or subways I used to take special pleasure whenever I could rise up to ask, "Would you like my seat, Father?" This was also the age of World War II movies, bits from which still stick in my mind, such as the one—from *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*?—in which the Chinese actor Richard Lee, who played so many villainous Japanese commanders, exposes the American lieutenant disguised as a Japanese officer, then announces, "You see, Lieutenant, I, too, went to Harvard. Perhaps you do not remember me. . . . " I myself have always regretted not having gone to Harvard, for I know I could have found dozens of occasions in which to use those same lines.

In my adolescence, movies became linked with sex. The movie theaters were where, in late grammar school years, one met girls. The movies were the scene of necking; later there were drive-ins (or passion pits, as they were called). From the movies one also picked up social-sexual tips on stylish kissing, how to light a cigarette, what drink to order. One learned what glamour was supposed to be. Movie actors and actresses had it—glamour, the great glowing thing itself. Many of the great stars of the period—Gary Cooper and Edward G. Robinson, Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn—played essentially the same role (chiefly, one gathers, themselves) over and over; yet that didn't seem to matter in the least, for when they were on the screen they filled it so interestingly. (Evelyn Waugh, himself an old moviegoer, wrote to Nancy Mitford in 1965 that he had lost his interest in plays and movies: "The girls all seem hideous and the men common.") One of the reasons movie stars could maintain their allure was that they did not go on television talk shows, as movie stars do now, there to reveal—almost all of them—the utter commonplaceness of their minds. Who was it who said that Shakespeare could not have written the plays attributed to him because there is conclusive proof that he acted in them?

At university, movies did not become less interesting to me, but my motives for going to them changed somewhat. Increasingly a paramount motive was entailed—escape. The movies were a great form of escape. (Which reminds me of a very good movie with the late Steve McQueen, called *The Great Escape*, a title that plays wonderfully on itself, almost as if Picasso had painted a picture en-

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titled "An Expensive Picasso.") The movies became a fine place to hide out while shirking one's studently duties. One night, owing a paper the next day on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I thought a movie would be just the warm-up needed for writing about Aristotle. Like Mr. Hulot, I treated myself to a brief holiday and went off to see a movie whose title I did not know but which turned out to be *The Killing*, Stanley Kubrick's first film. About a racetrack holdup, *The Killing* was then a true sleeper, an unheralded and hence unknown little classic. Coming upon a sleeper, a very rare experience today, was one of the great delights of moviegoing. Nowadays a person would have to be either a true movie addict or a complete naif to go into a movie without getting some rough idea of its content beforehand. A movie theater is less and less an oasis, a safety island, an escape hatch from worldly cares. Edmund Wilson, in *Upstate*, tells of feeling the strains of his bad heart while walking in Manhattan, when he "went into the nearest movie in order to go to the men's room. I did not notice the signs in front, which in any case were not explicit; but when I was coming out and saw what was on the screen, I sat down and watched the performance. It was an enormous human vagina which an actress in various ways was showing off. . . ." Enough—and more than enough—said.

Is the moviegoer a distinct psychological type? I do not say that everyone who goes regularly to the movies falls into the pattern of a psychological type, but true movie addicts do, I think, have certain qualities in common. They tend to be people who feel a deep if not well-defined longing; to be somewhat passive; to be romantic, a bit dreamy perhaps, with an ample capacity for fantasy. Movies make up a disproportionate share of their experience, and nothing is quite so real to them as an event or relationship that has an analogue in some movie. Often they can be spotted, like alcoholics who drink alone, going into movie theaters unaccompanied. Their memories are drenched in movies. In the hero-narrator of his novel *The Moviegoer*, Walker Percy has created a stellar example of the type.

Other people, so I have read, treasure memorable moments in their lives: the time one climbed the Parthenon at sunrise, the summer night one met a lonely girl in Central Park and achieved with her a sweet and natural relationship, as they say in books. I too once met a girl in Central Park, but it is not much to remember. What I remember is the time John Wayne killed three men with a carbine as he was falling to the dusty street in *Stagecoach*, and the time the kitten found Orson Welles in the doorway in *The Third Man*.

The one period in my life when I qualified as a serious moviegoer was during a ten-month stretch in the army while stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. Movies at Fort Hood were shown at 7:00 and 9:00 P.M. at three different post theaters, and I went off to them four or five evenings a week, usually alone, sometimes going by post cab to two different theaters on the same night. This may sound bleak, but the alternatives available in the nearby town of Killeen, Texas, were bleaker: a cheeseburger, a dozen or so beers, a tattoo. I would see anything (but *anything*) showing at the post theaters, with the exception of horror movies, toward which I had—and retain—a horror. Moviegoing was a most workable mode of killing slow Texas time, of in effect dreaming with my eyes open. Dreaming rightly describes the feel of heavy moviegoing, and I can recall scarcely any of the movies that I saw during this period, with the exception of a less than trivial movie entitled *Running Wild* starring the not late but nonetheless unlamented Mamie Van Doren.

At this same time I became the movie critic for the post newspaper, the weekly Fort Hood *Armored Sentinel*—but a movie critic with a difference. The difference was that, because new movies arrived at the post on Thursday and the newspaper's copy had to be at the printer's in Tyler, Texas, the preceding Wednesday, I reviewed movies without first seeing them; or at least most of them, for an occasional second-run movie, which I had seen earlier in my well-spent youth, was shown. But not being able to see the majority of the movies I reviewed proved, I found, no real disadvantage. Written from studio publicity releases, with my own gaudy phrasings added, my reviews were chiefly wise-guy summaries. When I did make a judgment, though, I was pleased to discover, upon seeing the movie after having written about it, how seldom I went far astray. This is not a testament to my acuity but to the predictability of most movies. After all, a movie with

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John Wayne or Debbie Reynolds, Jerry Lewis or Jayne Mansfield did not exactly suggest limitless possibilities. Years later I was offered a job as a movie critic on rather a more serious publication than the Fort Hood *Armored Sentinel.* But the thought of watching movies with a notebook, pen, and pocket flashlight in hand was not, I decided, my idea of a flaming good time. Besides, having to deal with flashlight, notebook, and pen, how would I be able to eat my popcorn?

Certain feelings, moods, and activities are to me everlastingly associated with moviegoing. The smell of popcorn—when they used to make it fresh in the theater and it still had a smell—is one of them. Special brands of candy, too, seem unthinkable outside a movie theater: Milk Duds, Snow Caps, Dots, Jujubes, Raisinettes, and other confections of goo and rock that have helped make American dentists among the leading money earners of our time. Then there is the oddly disoriented feeling which results from having gone into a movie in daylight and emerging from it into the night; and the connected feeling of slight, not necessarily unpleasant, confusion upon coming out of a movie in a strange city. There is something sinfully delicious about going off to the movies in the afternoon in the middle of the week. I always made it a point to sneak off to the movies at that time on every job I have ever held, lest anyone accuse me of being a completely responsible and mature person.

On the subject of maturity: is there, I wonder, an age beyond which too regular attendance at the movies is a bit unseemly? I note for example an odd discrepancy in the fact that, while the majority of movies seem to have been made with the young in mind, our leading national movie critics—Pauline Kael and Stanley Kauffmann, John Simon and Andrew Sarris, Vincent Canby and Judith Crist—are all past fifty years old. Of course, one might argue that going to the movies is a a way of staying young. The hot movie critic in the city in which I live, though he must by now be forty, continues to look like someone in his late adolescence. He is a man with a nearly boundless appreciation for movies of all kinds: serious, horror, science fiction, good, and bad. Thinking about him leads me to believe that the secret of remaining youthful in appearance is to remain immature.

Still, the most intelligent people I know beyond forty go less and less to the movies. This may have to do with the fact that at a certain age one ceases to learn much from the movies. One feels that one knows more about life than almost all the men and women who make movies. So one now looks to the movies chiefly for pleasurable escape but is no longer quite so able as formerly to depend upon finding it. Movie reviewers are less and less helpful. The daily press reviewers in my own city are men of too skimpy general culture to be trusted. Vincent Canby in the *New York Times* is a bit too dull to be read. Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker* is no longer quite to be believed. While she is doubtless the most talented of the people who regularly write about the movies, one too often feels that the movies are not a sufficient subject for her—so that reading Pauline Kael prattling away page after page on, say, the movie *Popeye* becomes a spectacle akin to listening to someone play "Mares Eat Oats and Does Eat Oats" on a Stradivarius. Of regular movie reviewers I tend to prefer Stanley Kauffmann, in the *New Republic,* because he has, in the general run of his judgments, the profound good sense to agree with me, and Vernon Young, in the *Hudson Review,* because he writes the most consistently interesting prose.

A large part of the problem may inhere in the job of movie critic. Anyone who reviews movies regularly must see something on the order of 150 new movies a year, not to speak of movies seen at film festivals and conferences. Too much of a bad thing, I should say; too much time spent in the dark, the effect of which, on movie reviewers, seems to push them to want to find a good thing every now and again—and then, traditionally, to make too much of it. Yet if one were to review only serious or even interesting movies, then one could probably do so, at best, no oftener than quarterly, for there are probably not enough such movies to keep a reviewer busy on a weekly, let alone a daily, basis.

James Agee is generally considered to have been the best movie reviewer to have practiced the trade in this country, and it is true that when he was good he was very, very good. (And when he was bad—as in a fast, flip paragraph he wrote putting down *Casablanca*—he could be horrid.) But what made Agee so good was his understanding that

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much of movie reviewing has to do with discriminating between the fourth- and the third-rate—and his additional and crucial understanding that the fourth- and even the fifth-rate movie could be oddly pleasurable. Conversely, serious things in the movies could be oddly dreary. Thus, in one of his 1943 reviews, Agee wrote: "*Ox-Bow* is one of the best and most interesting pictures I have seen for a long time, and it disappointed me. *Bataan* is incomparably less of a picture, and I liked it very much." Agee seems to have been quite without intellectual snobbery—imagine affirming in the pages of a sniffy journal like the *Nation*, as he did, that he rather liked *Lassie Come Home*—and the candor to own up to the fact that the trashy could be nonetheless fascinating. His reviews often contain lines like this on a dog of a 1943 movie entitled *Old Acquaintance*: "The odd thing is that the two ladies [Miriam Hopkins and Bette Davis] and Vincent Sherman, directing, make the whole business look fairly intelligent, detailed, and plausible; and that on the screen such trash can seem, even, mature and adventurous."

How to account for this strange condition in the movies whereby the patently junky can nevertheless often hold one's interest? It can be accounted for in large part, I think, by the fact that we ask less of the movies than we do of other forms of art and entertainment. To say of a movie that it has a fine chase scene or a few witty moments is generally to say that, on the whole, one approves of it. But who would be satisfied with a novel that had one good chapter, or a symphony with, say, thirty-two bars of striking music? Because one also puts out less mental effort in watching a movie than in reading a book or listening to serious music, one is the more willing to settle for less. Besides, a movie, unlike a bad book or wretched music, is scarcely ever completely boring. Something is always going on; some tidbit holds the attention. A few years ago I saw an entirely superfluous movie entitled *Interlude*; it was a crude update of *Intermezzo*, the older sentimental-passion classic with Ingrid Bergman and Leslie Howard. *Interlude* had nothing to recommend it but its star's, Oskar Werner's, raincoat. Yet when Werner wore that raincoat, a finely tailored piece of goods, the clichés, incredible emotions, and idiot conflicts at the heart of the movie seemed somehow bearable. Oskar Werner's raincoat, I thought, should have won that year's Oscar for best performance in a supporting role.

Spectacle, which Aristotle thought the "least artistic of all the parts of tragedy and the least to do with the art of poetry," has always for me been part of the attraction of the movies. I am, for example, a sucker for any movie in which men wear the uniforms of the British in India or of the French Foreign Legion; a patsy for any movie having to do with Napoleon; and an absolute pushover for any movie having to do with the Confederacy or the antebellum South. Certain subjects, similarly, seem to me foolproof fodder for movies—among them movies set in prisons or having to do with boxing or with the attempt to bring off a perfect heist. Adaptations from second-rate literature—B. Traven's *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*—seem often to make finer movies than adaptations from first-line literature, though it depends on who is doing the adapting: Aldous Huxley's movie version of *Pride and Prejudice* has always seemed to me excellent. Good writers when left alone to do their work—which I gather they only infrequently are—make the best recipe for a winning movie: Graham Greene's scenario for *The Third Man*, for example, or James Agee's for *The African Queen*. Every time I prefer to trust men and women with literary, rather than film, culture.

Film cultists, cineasts, and others will, or at any rate should, be appalled by much of what I have written here. For them the movies are preeminently a visual business, and a very serious one indeed. Others may agree with Voltaire, who said that "the spirit that reigns in the theater is the faithful image of the spirit of a nation"—substituting the word "movies" for "theater"—for they find the movies, and popular culture generally, invaluable for understanding the national character. Still others may side with Madame du Châtelet, Voltaire's mistress, who said of the arts generally, "One may have preferences, but why exclusions?" and find this remark especially applicable to the movies. There is much to be said for all these views, but since much has already been said for them, perhaps I can be excused for not saying it again.

No, I am more interested in trying to dis-

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"I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day. . . . I see one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." — FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

In *The Life of Lorena Hickok: E.R.'s Friend*, Doris Faber's focus led her to mention only briefly Hickok's reports to Harry Hopkins — head of Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Noted historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., considers such scant attention "a mistake." Hopkins himself told Eleanor Roosevelt that Hickok's reports would be "the best history of the Depression." And no less a figure than FDR had hoped to see her reports published — something she attempted, but failed to accomplish.

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cover what has happened to all but ruin the charming pastime of moviegoing. It is difficult to date such things, but I have the feeling that the decline set in sometime in the early 1960s when (I haven't checked the date) Susan Sontag, writing in *Partisan Review*, remarked that going to the movies was a much more casual and pleasurable activity than going to the theater. For the movies one needn't dress or buy tickets in advance or plan dinner out. "Let's catch a flick" was all one needed to say, and delight awaited. This was of course perfectly true, but all the same I wish Miss Sontag hadn't said it. The effect was rather as if a restaurant critic, writing in the *Sunday New York Times*, praised a quaint, inexpensive restaurant for its superlative food: the place instantly becomes noisy and costly, and the quality of the food goes down.

Earlier than this there had been people who took movies very seriously. Universities had film societies, and every major city had at least one little art house, where a pallid young woman smoking a Russian cigarette looked up contemptuously from her Baudelaire long enough to sell you a ticket for a Peruvian film that opened on a scene of peasant boys slaughtering a vicuña. Cultish stuff, really, but sometime in the middle 1960s the cult went national. Movies, alas, turned into film. Art—and highly artful—films had been made right along; such men as Kurosawa, Ray, Fellini, Antonioni, De Sica, and the young Orson Welles had, after all, been at it for decades. Yet now nearly every movie was thought to be, potentially, an art work. In a memorable phrase Frank Sinatra, Old Blue Eyes himself, speaking at an Oscar awards ceremony, said it was time for Hollywood to get back into "the Mona Lisa business."

Movies, in short, had become a highly serious and even more highly self-conscious matter. Wherever I went during that time movies were topic number one. Joining a small, amiable-looking group in the corner of an upper-middle-class living room, one was likely to be told that they were discussing the moral dimension of *Alfie*, and no one was likely to be welcome there long who said he hadn't noticed that it had any. Everywhere one was polled for one's opinion of the latest Altman, Friedkin, Scorsese. Around dinner tables, on couches, in faculty lounges many a sentence began, "Pauline Kael thinks . . . ," "John Simon says . . . ," "Andrew Sarris feels . . . ." I recall the wave of nausea that swept through me one evening when I was out with a couple who asked what did I think of *Annie Hall*—and in a tone of voice that implied an invitation to talk about Woody Allen as if he were Dante. And, lo, it wasn't long thereafter that Woody Allen, judging from pronunciamentos he made in many a portentous interview, began to talk as if he had come to believe he truly was Dante.

Meanwhile the universities, in their continuing effort to be first with the worst, inaugurated film-studies courses and programs, for which parents could pay upward of ten thousand dollars a year to send their sons or daughters to the movies. English department professors toted around essays in their briefcases with snooze-inducing titles like "Ingmar Bergman and Women." "Kael feels. . . ," "Simon thinks. . . ," "Sarris says. . . ." Movies were being called the Now art. Clearly, things had gotten out of hand; it was almost enough to make an old moviegoer consider taking up bridge.

I do not mean to say that, in the midst of all this glut of chat and chaff, good movies weren't, and still aren't, being made. The forty-or-so-minute sequence between the young boy and his horse on the Greek island in *Black Stallion* left me aswoon. I disco-danced in my seat at *Saturday Night Fever*. I gave my sloppy housekeeping seal of approval to *Raging Bull* and to the performance of Robert De Niro, who seems to me well on his way to becoming the actor of the age. Better news yet: some of the tumult seems to be dying down. In the college curriculum film studies appear to be slipping. One scarcely ever hears "Simon says . . . ," et cetera. It has long since become clear, as Hilton Kramer has put it, that "Pauline Kael is not going to be the Edmund Wilson of our time." The Now art is beginning to look a little Then.

But even as the wave rolls back, much detritus is left on the shore. Movies continue to be greatly overrated, and one must pick one's way around them carefully as across a mine field. Some of the most dangerous among them are those that take themselves, and are taken by others, most seriously. I chose, for example, to step around both *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*! I saw *Star Wars* but took a pass on *The Empire Strikes Back*. I

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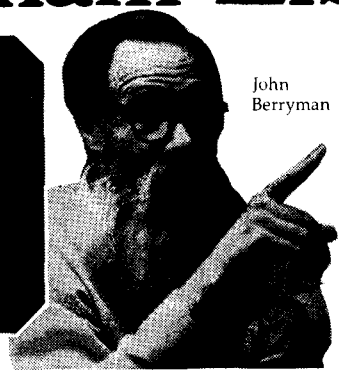

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wouldn't see *The China Syndrome* with the aid of a Guggenheim grant; nor, for all my admiration of Laurence Olivier, *The Jazz Singer* on a Rockefeller. I would sooner undergo exploratory surgery than see any movie by Ken Russell. But I'm afraid I stepped right in the middle of *Kramer Versus Kramer*. I also stepped on—perhaps the metaphors here ought to be switched from mine fields to cow pastures—*The Marriage of Eva Braun*, which I thought ought to be annulled. Seeing two or three such dogs in a row, I understand the feeling of a friend of mine, a woman of sure taste and a strong antipathy to nonsense, who one night emerged from a bad movie to announce to her husband, "I don't ever want to see a movie that I haven't already seen before."

Still, old habits do not die so easily, and I continue to search for movies that are at least not directly offensive. On my personal moviegoing front, there have been setbacks and gains. As for setbacks, my nearest neighborhood theater, in walking distance from home, went porno, showing movies with such titles as *800 Fantasy Lane, Sweet Secrets, Pussycat Ranch,* and *Teddy Bare.* (This theater has since returned to what, on its marquee, is announced as "Family Entertainment.") On the credit side, another neighborhood theater has become a rerun house, changing its bill of fare fully four times each week, and showing such lush offerings as Greta Garbo, Humphrey Bogart, and Jean Renoir double features. (Not that I can any longer sit through a double feature; as legs are the first thing to go in an athlete, so it is an old moviegoer's bottom that first gives way.) This theater also runs some pretty putrid double features as well, such as Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*, an evening that has all the allure of riding on a whiplash roller coaster after having been in a spaghetti-eating contest.

Theaters are also cropping up that show not reruns but what I think of as late or second runs—that is, movies that have played around but have not yet been shown on television. Where the glitzier new theaters charge $4.00 for a movie, these theaters charge $1.50 or $2.00. Having gone to the latter, I have discovered that certain movies I would hate at $4.00 I find tolerable at $1.50. Although I haven't yet seen it, Goldie Hawn in *Private Benjamin* seems to me possible at $1.50 but a cheat at $4.00. *Ordinary People*, which I haven't seen either but which strikes me as having that *Kramer Versus Kramer* middlebrow dog-dead earnestness, I don't think I should care to see for nothing. It's not, you understand, the principle of the thing; it's the money.

Moviegoers today seem to me in a condition similar to that of lovers of novels. If their appetite is to be satisfied, it will have to be fed largely on a diet of older movies; and it is quite possible to do this, for there is by now a large enough backlog of good older movies just as there is a sufficient backlog of nineteenth-century novels to keep the novel lover off the streets. Hope, however, lingers on. Perhaps at this moment Billy Wilder is directing Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon in an urbane comedy; or François Truffaut is planning a series of movies adapted from the novels of Simenon; or Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn are on location shooting a contemporary remake of *The Thin Man.* Ah, would it were so. But I fear the likelihood is greater that production is already well underway on a movie, starring Charles Bronson and Farrah Fawcett, in which a killer shark, on the rampage in Florida, is swallowing up condominiums—a disaster movie, in every sense of the term.

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Pedagogica Deserta

Memoir of a Fulbright Year in Syria

SAMUEL PICKERING, JR.

"DEAR MR & MRS PIKRING pleas don't get out to day after 5 in the evening." My wife and I found this note on our door one day in March after we returned from the market. Again rumor predicted trouble in Latakia and we had been warned. We stayed in our apartment that night. This, though, was nothing new; we had not been out on the streets after six o'clock since the end of November.

Each academic year the Council for International Exchange of Scholars sends some five hundred "Fulbrighters" to study and lecture abroad. Most go to Western and Eastern Europe and to, if not the westernized, at least the semi-industrialized, world. A number, however, end up in those countries which drive sensitive men to drink before noon. In 1975 I taught English and American literature at the University of Jordan in Amman. This past year I was headed for Ghana. Early in the summer, though, a coup changed my plans, and in September my wife and I arrived in Damascus.

My post was at Tishreen University in Latakia, six and a half hours from Damascus by bus. A town of slightly over two hundred thousand people on the Mediterranean, Latakia is Syria's most important seaport. Before we left the United States, an official in Washington assured us that the city supported a thriving international community. Since the troubles in Beirut, he said, many people had moved to Latakia. The discrepancy between what was described and what we found was great. No native speakers of English lived in Latakia, or at least we never discovered any. Two months after we arrived we met a French couple and they became our only Western acquaintances. In the fall many Russians were present in the city. Later, after the Moslem Brothers, the terrorist organization, had assassinated a few, they disappeared into their compound, leaving us alone on the streets.

In September our embassy in Damascus tried to be helpful. Unfortu-

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nately they knew little about Latakia or Tishreen University. Stretched bloody by violence between religious sects (or "insects," as a student mistakenly but perhaps accurately labeled them in an essay), wedged between the rocks of Soviet imperialism and Iraqi destiny and the hard place of the Israeli position on the question of a Palestinian homeland, and stuck in the morass of Lebanon's internecine warfare, Syria itself is not easy to know. Policy can change like the desert wind, the press is strictly controlled, and rumor becomes the only truth.

Classes were scheduled to begin at Tishreen on September 29, so after a week of waiting in Damascus while the embassy decided if Latakia was calm enough after recent riots, we left on a bus. Finding an apartment was easy. The assistant dean asked how much we had to spend, then told us he knew just the flat for that price. Not surprisingly, we later learned that the owner's wife was the dean's cousin. Assuredly the dean received a commission, but that was all right, for our landlord was a superb man. He was an Alawite general in the army. Because they are only 10 percent of the population, the Alawite Moslems from northern Syria had long been treated as second-class citizens by the dominant Sunni majority, some 70 percent of the population. Like rural southerners in the United States, a disproportionate number of Alawites made careers in the army. When Hafez al-Assad, an Alawite, became president of Syria in a coup in 1970, the Alawite military came into its own, financially and socially. For a time this did not cause much resentment among the Sunnis. Assad brought much-needed stability, and as schools were built in, and electricity spread to, poor isolated villages, the Alawite underclass rose above mere servantdom. Although a Sunni town, Latakia was surrounded by Alawite villages, and many of my students were villagers seizing the first opportunity for higher education they had ever been offered.

During the past three years, however, resentment of Alawites has grown. Business has been bad; military expenditure is awesomely high; Sunni merchants blame Assad for the nation's economic problems and accuse the government and the army of corruption. In hopes of destabilizing the government and bringing an Islamic revolution to Syria, the Moslem Brothers have viciously assassinated the Alawite educated elite, whether or not individual Alawites have had anything to do with the government. The disenchanted Sunni majority has not lent the Brothers active aid. On the other hand, the Sunnis have not condemned them either. Since there are few Moslem Brothers, the Sunnis reason that when the government falls they will be able to brush them aside and establish a government of their own. During the past year, hatreds have boiled. The good are silent, and violence has spiraled as the government's secret police have viciously repressed dissent or potential dissent. At times dur-

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ing the year, Aleppo and Hama seemed foreign countries brought back under Damascus's rule only by tank law. "You don't know," a student told me with tears in her eyes. "The people die like rain."

As a general, our landlord was well guarded. Three to seven soldiers lived on the third floor of our building. So when bullets began to fly in Latakia in the spring, we felt almost safe. Growing accustomed to automatic rifles, however, is not easy for a teacher used to nothing more violent than the correspondence column of *PMLA*. Sometimes when we climbed the stairs to our fifth-floor apartment, a new guard would greet us gun in hand. Frequently visitors received escorts up to our flat. Most took it in stride, but some never returned.

Tishreen University consisted of four faculties: engineering, medicine, agriculture, and letters. For years construction of a new university has been under way. Unfortunately the end is not in sight, and the faculty of letters is, and will be for many more years, housed in a secondary school building just beyond the freight entrance to the port. Unlike the United States, where the shortcomings of education are obvious, Third World countries seem to believe that education will provide the answers to all their problems. Consequently governments in such countries, in part because rational dissent is stifled, confuse themselves with the Great First Cause and create universities by decree. The planning comes later—if indeed it ever comes. Tishreen University as it is now was not the gleam that shone in the eye of its creator. In my first day at the faculty of letters, I asked to see the library. The assistant dean showed me an empty room and said, "This is the library, but we don't have any books yet." Since the English department itself was only two years old, the absence of books, although unexpected, did not unduly startle me.

In Jordan, when I was asked what I wanted to teach, I tried to be a good advertisement for my country and, trusting to the fairness of my colleagues, said I would teach what the department needed. As a consequence I, like everybody else, taught one elementary and two upperclass courses each semester. In Syria, when queried about courses, I responded as I had done in Jordan. But there I made a mistake. Dignity is important in Syria, and the accommodating man is often seen as a person of no consequence, to be used and abused at will. First-year classes at Tishreen contained large numbers of students, sometimes two hundred. By the second year many left the university, so that frequently classes had only forty students. In the first semester I taught sixteen hours of courses. Unlike my three Syrian professional colleagues, as I later found out, I had all first-year students. Six hours a week I taught prose and ten hours a week I taught composition. The chairman, a "specialist" in prose and poetry, taught only second-year students; the assistant dean, a specialist in drama, did the same. Most of the first-year courses were taught

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by two demonstrators, recent graduates of Syrian universities, and me. This almost graduate-assistant kind of treatment did not make me resentful. To obtain a Ph.D., my Syrian colleagues had to work harder, make compromises, and suffer indignities which I knew I could not imagine. Theirs was a real achievement, one that marked them out in Syrian eyes as not merely different from, but better than, others.

My wife and I were the only Americans the majority of my students had ever met, and our style of living was different from that of the Syrian professors. Instead of buying a car or taking a taxi to the university, I walked across town. Unlike Syrian professors, who dressed carefully and kept themselves immaculate by never erasing a blackboard, I wore corduroy trousers, a corduroy sports jacket, and blue topsiders to class. When I erased my own blackboard and dusted myself with chalk during a two-hour class, students were astonished. Since the lowest workers, porters in the harbor, wore sneakers, my shoes provoked much discussion. Six months later a student told me that he and his friend had been puzzled by my shoes at first. "Every Doctor of Language in the university considered himself a minister," he said, "but you did not. We honor you for your shoes. You come to work." Since I did not appear as a minister, confusion about me and my position lasted throughout the year. In April a student who had attended almost every class but whose English was poor asked me if I were an elementary school teacher in America. Numerous times surprised students told my wife and me, "Americans are so simple and humble."

These students meant to compliment us. Complexity often implied corruption or favoritism. Our accessibility or simplicity or democracy was thought admirable. In contrast to the typical Syrian faculty member, I must have appeared as a man who carried himself in a manner unbecoming his position. By doing so I cut the ground from under that faculty member's hard-won achievement and obliquely undermined the hierarchical structure of university life. No wonder first-year courses were loaded on me and I was never consulted about my timetable. I only began a slow burn, however, when I learned that while I taught six days a week, my fellow professors were teaching four.

Although I began to teach on September 29, the chairman did not appear until two and a half weeks later. The third full-time Ph.D. member of the department did not arrive until November. The random appearance of the faculty members was paralleled by the students' attendance. Tishreen was an open university. Many students never attended classes because they held jobs, quite a few teaching in remote villages. Given eight years to pass the required courses, other students pursued a relaxed course of study. As in secondary schools, university education depended primarily upon rote learning. Class discussions, particularly

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those discussions which raised ideas different from the professor's, were harshly discouraged. At the end of term, professors' lecture notes were mimeographed and sold for seventy-five cents a course. If a student memorized these, he had a good chance of passing. To some extent the notes took the place of assigned texts. The university did not have a bookstore; often local booksellers were not informed what texts were needed for courses until it was too late to order them. As a result, many students never had books, and one member of the department even suggested that books were an unnecessary expense. He proposed that all professors have their notes printed before the lectures started. That way, he explained, students would not have to buy books like *The Old Man and the Sea* or *The Penguin Book of English Verse.*

With new students appearing even on the last day of class, December 24, teaching was a tedious matter of repetition, careful enunciation, and slow speech. Although all my students were majoring in English, and this meant taking eight to ten courses in English a year, very few could actually speak much English. In most cases, secondary schools provided them with little background. Of the approximately two hundred and fifty people who taught English in the Latakia school province, fewer than a third were full-time teachers, and these taught other subjects as well. The rest were part-timers. Most of these part-timers were my students, usually poor boys and girls who knew almost no English and could not write a simple sentence.

Long and narrow, with one hundred and fifty students clustered on benches, my classroom was at the front of the building. Tractor trailers loaded with weapons from the Soviet Union or consumer goods from China thundered by at two-minute intervals. Teaching was impossible while a truck passed. Eventually I obtained a microphone. Unfortunately it was stuck together more with hope than tape and was usually broken. When it was repaired, either I couldn't use it because of static in the system or the electricity was off. As a result, I lectured by cupping my hands in front of my mouth and shouting. Throat sprays and pills quickly became more necessary to my teaching than paper and pencils.

The students themselves were a diverse group of boys and girls—rich and poor, religious and nonreligious, young and old. For many it was the first time they had attended class with members of the opposite sex. English was extremely popular; French was taught, but only fifty or sixty students each year majored in French in comparison to the three hundred and fifty or four hundred who majored in English. Enrollment numbers were never exact; faculty members never received a roll, and the president himself was not sure how many students were in the university.

All my students dreamed of going to America. Despite Syria's close military ties with the Soviet Union, Russian was not taught because stu-

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dents simply refused to study it. If language is the greatest propaganda instrument in the world, then the West has won massive propaganda victories in the Middle East. Indeed, America's cultural hegemony over Syria is quite amazing. Although our trade with Syria is not large and ignorance of America is widespread, the Syrians equate America with modernity. Most students romanticize life in the United States as a paradise golden with coin and opportunity. Although Syrian secondary schools drum in the failings of America and capitalism, the message usually doesn't take—except, perhaps, with the Palestinians, who as a group are more sophisticated and thoughtful than others. True, much is made of our racial problems. On several occasions—and this must appear somewhere in a secondary school textbook—students asked me if it was true that a black man had to bow down whenever he met a white man on the street. Questions about race, however, seemed to come more from curiosity than from belief in racial equality. Students greeted interracial marriages with disgust, and blacks, I was told, had smaller brains than whites.

The abilities of first-year students varied, but at the beginning of the year most were at a second-grade level in English. They could not speak or write a sentence, and in first-term composition I taught primarily simple and compound sentences. During the second term I made students write three- to five-hundred-word essays, and I read and marked more than eighteen hundred of these. Much improvement was made, but I am certain that this coming year the deluge of rote learning will wash away all their experience in my classes.

The students were my joy. We had no adult friends aside from our landlord and his wife, neither of whom spoke English; the French couple; random American visitors; and one teacher who lived an hour and a half away. The faculty at Tishreen was not sophisticated enough to realize that the only Americans in Latakia were just a teacher and his wife. Two members of the faculty told us they had been warned to avoid us because we might be CIA. When the Cultural Affairs Officer from the embassy delivered our air freight, he visited the assistant dean. As soon as he left, the dean asked me if he was a spy. From that date in early October until mid-February, the assistant dean avoided me and we did not speak.

I soon had a huge following among the students and, like a bitch in heat, was not always sure I enjoyed it. After classes every day, students walked uptown with me to talk and practice their English. In the mornings they would wait to catch me on the way to the university. My wife and I rarely went shopping without running into students. During the break between terms we went to Jordan and Egypt. Unable to find us, students left notes at the stores we frequented. When we returned in

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February, a bookseller gave me the following letter: "I havn't ability to express about my feelings. is it correct that a man need to see his brother again? if you have, or if you would like. When you catch this letter, said to my friend, who is the owner of library. when I can see you Because I need to see you. I am eager to see you. Your effectionate friend."

Many students invited us to their villages, and the days we spent visiting were the happiest and also the most tiring—because no one spoke English well—that we spent in Syria. At the beginning of the year when they could not speak English, students communicated by notes which they labored over like sculptors. A girl who had worked on her simple sentences invited us to her village, writing: "I live in a Beutiful town. It is called Jable. I want you to visit it with your waif. In jable my family will BE happy when you and your waif visits us. my mother also want me to calld us. Then if you came Y feel too happy. I writ theses composition Becaus Y respect you. And Y admir very much of your waif. It is a gentil and Beautiful woman. what you said, yes, or no. A simple sentences."

Early in the year a teacher warned me that professors did not talk to students outside the classroom or office. I paid no attention to the warning and must have been a disturbing influence. Vague cultural assumptions support the Fulbright scholar program. Generally it is assumed that academic exchanges build bridges between peoples and cultures and, in the case of American grantees, broaden their horizons. What the Council for International Exchange of Scholars does not say, but what the State Department correctly assumes, is that the Fulbright program is a propaganda effort. In Syria the State Department seems interested in establishing links with, and presenting a favorable picture of, America to people who have or will have influence. Emphasis is not on the masses but on the elite, and with Syrian-American relations at an ebb, the cultural branch of the embassy avoids disturbing the sensibilities of those who have power. In contrast, the Fulbright program, as it developed in my case, was educationally revolutionary. American simplicity and democracy go counter to the Syrian educational system. By encouraging class discussion and original thought, and by treating the students seriously, I implicitly criticized the methods of other professors. But fresh educational air is not necessarily pleasant educational air, and instead of attracting the educational elites, I put them off. Although the nation is ostensibly socialist, people in Syria are not equal. Money and position shape castes, and tribal, village, and religious ties often determine success in the university and outside it. As propaganda I think my year was successful, but perhaps not in the way it was intended to be. Since returning to the United States I have received several letters from students. These students are comparatively poor and will never become

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cabinet ministers or Ph.D.'s, but will instead be housewives and village schoolmasters. None will ever be singled out for cultivation by our State Department. Perhaps the Fulbright program, instead of building cultural bridges with the people who politically or educationally matter in the Third World, prevents such bridges from being built.

Syria exhausted me emotionally. Syrian students, with their society in transition from a conservative rural Moslem culture to a modified urban Western culture, face confusing problems. Rarely do they express their confusion or frustration publicly because they believe it will be interpreted as political disenchantment and they themselves will disappear. In private, they ask for personal advice and voice their disgust with the state of the nation. Private revenge, although discouraged by sophisticated urbanites, still exists in villages. One boy, for example, after recounting a harsh tale to me, asked if I thought he should kill the villain of the piece. Some people in his village thought he should, he said, but he wondered what a Westerner would do.

For women, Western feminist concerns about equal job opportunity are beside the point. In Syria women are not equal to men. The birth of a girl is often an occasion for unhappiness rather than celebration. "I was the second girl in my family," a student wrote; "my father went out for three days when I was born in spite of he already had a son." Because I was the representative of a progressive society, students frequently believed that I could solve problems which involved a conflict between conservative family or community traditions and modern individualism. Traditionally, a girl's father chose her husband for her. "But the great wish is to meet my love and to live with him forever," a girl wrote in an essay; "I pray for him. And I implore God to gather us one day. I Love person sinc when my age was six years. . . . Each of can't live without the other. But the great problem is my family. They did not agree to marry him . . . and there is another problem takes place now. A lawer came to my hous. And he became friend of my family. He want to engage me. All my family agree with him. But I refuse. Because I want to marry my childhood friend whom I love. I hate that Lawer. I wish I did not see him. But he always comes to our house. This is my problem. So I ask professor pickering to advice me. But not at the class. And God bless you."

Until they came to know me, I was a cartoon figure to many students. Their perception of me, like the Third World's perception of America and Americans, had in great part been shaped by television advertising, pop music, and B-grade films. If Westerners are not thought immoral, they are certainly believed to be enlightened, and this led to embarrassing moments. Having received many invitations, I suspected nothing when a female student invited me to a cake party after class one Thurs-

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day in the school cafeteria. When Thursday afternoon arrived, the girl told me that the authorities would not let her have the party at school; consequently, she had changed its location and said her cousin would drive us there. A white Mercedes picked us up at the front gate. As we roared through Latakia at what seemed fifty miles an hour, the girl added that sadly none of her friends had been able to come to the party, and she hoped I would understand. Perspiration and understanding broke out simultaneously. Resembling a set from an Egyptian film, the apartment was furnished in "Louis Farouk," gaudy and expensive gold and silver. Between two sofas in the living room was a low table. On it were several kinds of luncheon meats, trays of nuts, assorted cheeses, oranges, apples, lemons, chocolates, two types of imported beer, a bottle of Johnnie Walker, two bowls of pink and white carnations, and a three-layered cake covered with whipped cream. When I sat on a couch, the girl sat next to me. The cousin started to sit opposite, but then he looked at his watch, said he had an important appointment, apologized, and left.

When I am nervous, I talk. For an hour I talked incessantly while the girl stared into my eyes. When I slowly slid to the end of the couch, she followed, serving me cake and urging me to drink. When half my backside hung over the edge of the couch and I was in danger of falling on the floor and undergoing I knew not what, I stood up and asked to see the apartment. Politely I complimented the bathroom; my hostess responded by turning on the water and asking if I would like a bath. An imitation tiger-skin blanket covered the double bed in the bedroom. If ever I wanted, she said, I could spend the night there. This was Arab hospitality carried to an extreme. Finally, after I had inspected all the rooms, I felt unable to face the couch again. I thanked my hostess and cut and ran—not, however, without presents for my wife: the carnations and the remains of the cake.

Although it may seem obvious, I was never certain what the girl wanted. Rich and living alone—something unique among the students—I suspect she may have fallen prey to the cinematic depiction of Westerners. Maybe she simply wanted a high grade. Perhaps, however, this was an attempt to compromise me. As the only Americans in Latakia, my wife and I suffered from a kind of paranoia: "minority-itis." People stared at us wherever we went and we could not fade into a crowd. By December we began to think we were watched. Our mail had been routinely opened; often letters did not arrive, and occasionally odd things happened. When my wife's parents opened one of her letters, they found a snapshot inside. They assumed it was our landlord's family. It wasn't; the people were strangers. The person reading the mail probably had several letters open on the desk, and when he resealed them he mistakenly put the picture into my wife's letter.

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According to rumor, there were nineteen secret police organizations in Syria. I knew of five in Latakia, two having their local headquarters on streets immediately behind our apartment building. In the spring, an acquaintance who had a friend in one branch of the secret police obtained copies of reports on me. In all university classes there were spies—students paid to report on professors to branches of the secret police. Although this process did not bother me, because I was a foreigner and able to leave the country, it frightened and inhibited Syrian teachers. Only one aspect of the reports about me was interesting. It was alleged that I favored girls in my classes. Supposedly I cultivated their friendship, not for "sexual relations," but because I wanted to discuss politics with them. While at the "party" in the girl's apartment, I had asked her many questions about the problems in Latakia in order to keep us talking. Showing little interest in sex, I must have shown an immoderate concern about politics. Perhaps she was the source of the reports. Most probably she was not, but it is rather nice to think she might have been.

A student whose parents forced her to attend university described in an essay her dislike of studying. "I always," she wrote, "asked our God to rest me from this calamity. I want to sleep without any think of the studies." This Fulbright lecturer in a Third World country seldom thought of studies. Grading compositions at home took much time, but class preparations were minimal. Day after day I repeated lessons in composition, trying to teach my students basic grammar rules and how to write simple and compound sentences. In prose I taught *The Old Man and the Sea* and the first forty pages of George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, this latter being a terrible choice for first-year students whose reading was frequently at the primer level. In composition I spent most of my time explaining idioms and defining simple words like green or blue, living room or dining room. Rarely was I able to venture very far into thematic topics; when I did, two-thirds of the class was lost. Similarly, my colleagues and I never discussed literature. The university and Syria itself did not provide the kind of atmosphere in which serious thought could flourish. Good books in English could not be bought in Latakia, and since I was not an Arabist the possibility of research did not exist. Consequently every night I went to sleep as my student wished, "without any think of the studies."

For the Fulbrighter in Syria and perhaps in the Third World in general, what happens outside class influences the academic experience more than what happens in class. During the first weeks, thoughts abdominal replace thoughts intellectual; the anatomy changes and one becomes more bowel and less brain. Once things internal are acclimated, however, then external events and conditions determine the quality of

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the experience. Although my wife and I saw much of Syria, and although many nights in Latakia were filled with the sound of music—the *1812 Overture* with mortar and kalishnikov effects—we were usually bored. The cinemas showed either broad Egyptian comedies or gory Italian and American gangster films. There was only one good restaurant in town, and it was frequently closed because of the troubles. To survive we bought a radio, listened to the BBC's Middle East service, and planned vacations. We had a television set, and once a week saw "The Virginian." Sometimes "Switch" appeared. Those were evenings to be savored.

When the Iranians first took the embassy personnel in Tehran hostage, and the State Department conducted a token evacuation of Americans from eleven Moslem countries, our feelings of isolation and vulnerability grew. We were out on a limb far from Damascus and communication was difficult. Our landlord had a telephone, but the link between Latakia and Damascus was often disrupted. In class, students who were nervous because I might leave Syria assured me that my wife and I had nothing to fear. "We Moslems love you," students said, and promised to take us to their villages if danger developed. One acquaintance, whose brother-in-law was a general, declared he would transport us to his village in a tank if necessary. The first time I heard such things, they made me more comfortable. But after I had been reassured some forty times, nagging worries and feelings of vulnerability began to grow. Where there was so much smoke, or concern, there must be a little flame.

The only member of the English department whom I considered a friend indirectly fanned our worries. A Syrian and a brilliant student, he had completed his Ph.D. in Britain, published essays in good academic journals, and returned to Syria to teach. Apolitical and perhaps the most honest man I have ever met—and in Syria to be completely honest is practically impossible, and even dangerous—he suffered from the accidental disability of being an Alawite. He had taught at the University of Damascus but had left, among other reasons, because he feared for his life. Now as assassinations spread to Latakia—two streets behind our apartment a man was murdered—my friend became convinced that an attempt would be made on his life. Although he lived an hour and a half from Latakia, he spent two nights a week in the city. In the afternoons he would visit and confide his fears to us. His was the only literate conversation we enjoyed in English, but since his fears were all-consuming, our subject matter was limited. In our isolation—feeling under siege because of Iran, hearing America violently attacked on television as President Assad tried to blame Syria's internal troubles on external forces, and talking with our friend about little except his fears—we began to get the wind up. With no one to help us put our foolish anxieties into reasonable

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perspective, we retreated more into our apartment and marked off on the calendar the days until term break. Eventually, the embassy called us to Damascus to inform us about the state of affairs in Syria and Iran and to reassure us, but it is in the nature of a diplomat's existence, in Syria at least, that form and circumstance separate him from what is happening in the country. He reads scores of informative reports, but these are no substitute for being able to move about freely. Knowing that we felt isolated, the ambassador suggested that we move to the University of Damascus or the University of Aleppo. Aleppo, he said, was a particularly appealing city. Because I felt responsible for my students at Tishreen and because of a perhaps adolescent dislike of appearing a quitter, we remained in Latakia. This was fortunate; two months later disturbances shattered Aleppo's appeal, and the university, to all intents and purposes, closed for the year.

Like scholars, diplomats depend upon certain sources for their knowledge. Aside from us, the embassy had no sources in Latakia, and after we returned there, the embassy's assurances, which had sounded so good in Damascus, evaporated like rain on a hot sidewalk. On those days which my frightened colleague spent in Latakia he went to the university by different means and different ways. By mid-December I too varied my route to the university. The end of term brought great relief. Almost immediately my wife and I left for a month in Jordan and Egypt, where we would not stand out but would be just two more nondescript Westerners. There we could escape the shackling authentic experience and enjoy the comfortable tourist experience.

We returned to Latakia in late January, relaxed and ready for whatever came our way. I graded five hundred exams, and when classes began ten days late, on February 19, I was eager to start. I was also pleased because I had demanded and gotten a second-year course: Shakespeare. The chairman, a man with vast resources of low cunning, invited us to his home for tea and urged me to teach nineteen hours—prose, composition, and Shakespeare. I had learned my lesson for the first term and was not accommodating; composition and Shakespeare were enough. Once classes started, the term quickly became chaotic.

Although Syria suffers from a dearth of trained teachers, no exemptions—legal ones—are made for military service. University professors must serve like everyone else. Frequently, this is done after they finish their graduate education and are teaching at a university. Usually after they complete their basic training, they are seconded back to the university where they teach as second lieutenants, distinguishable from civilians only in that they receive military pay instead of the much higher university pay. Basic training begins in the fall and spring, not in the summer, so that universities are often left with half-taught courses on

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their hands. In March my friend who had been frightened for his life left the university to begin his military training. At the same time, the chairman, who was also liable for military service, came down with an attack of diabetes and disappeared to Damascus for two or three weeks. In April one of our two demonstrators left Syria on an AID fellowship to work for his Ph.D. in the United States. The only persons left to teach courses were the assistant dean (recently demoted to an ordinary teacher), the second demonstrator, and I. Courses were piled on the demonstrator, and the assistant dean's wife taught part-time. The department muddled through the term. Many courses, however, went untaught for long periods and the students suffered.

Even more inhibiting to the students' progress than the absence of professors was the state of the nation. In February violence in Syria grew geometrically. By the end of the month Aleppo was a little Beirut, and the Fulbright lecturer at Aleppo University had left the country. Latakia was not so violent. Assassinations occasionally occurred in the daytime, but most trouble happened at night. Dynamite bombs exploded practically every evening. Counting them became exciting and addictive; in May, when a temporary calm descended, life seemed less intense and we were bored. Because they did not want to be on the streets at dusk, students avoided classes that met after four o'clock. My colleagues received notes and telephone calls threatening their lives. My teaching timetable changed radically. No one consulted me; I learned about the changes only when I went to class at the wrong time. Eventually a reason for the changing timetable became apparent as my morning classes became afternoon classes. A foreigner was safer on the streets late in the afternoon than was a Syrian professor. Guards armed with tommy guns had guarded the faculty of letters twenty-four hours a day throughout the year. Now there were more guards. And on some days when there had been much trouble the night before, guards seemed to outnumber students.

Gun battles began to occur at night between the Moslem Brothers and their sympathizers and the secret police. In Aleppo and elsewhere, Russians were murdered. This caused us some worry because many Latakians who had never seen Americans assumed we were Russians. People often said "Russians" in a derogatory tone when we passed them on the street. "My God, sir, my God," a nervous girl burst out in class, "you look so like a Russian." Acquaintances became worried, and one of them took matters into his own hands. Meeting us in town, he informed us he had done us a favor. He said he had discovered that many people thought we were Russians. To prevent a mistake, he said, he had spread the word to people who in turn would inform those behind the violence that we were not Russians but Americans. For such a favor I was not

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grateful. Nobody gets things right in Syria; it is better for one to lie low and say nothing than to have attention called to one.

The troubles came to a head in March. Elite commandos appeared in Latakia, and together with the secret police they attempted to crush the terrorists. From the balcony of our apartment I watched gun battles. For two weeks life in the university slowed almost to a halt. Students stayed away from class. Out of one hundred and fifty students in a class, two or three who lived nearby might show up. Walking to school was nerve-wracking yet intoxicating. From behind sandbags, soldiers guarded street corners; often streets were completely empty or sealed off. In its disregard for truth, rumor waxed poetic. Although the violence subsided—it never died out—classes did not return to normal. It would have been abnormal if they had. Alawite students from the villages were frightened and in some cases embittered. Sunnis became more opposed to the government while Christians damning both sects withdrew into their own community. The only assurance that the future seemed to hold was that someday there would be more and worse violence.

During the period of the worst troubles, I taught *Hamlet* to those members of my second-year class who attended. The parallels between Hamlet's rotten Denmark and Assad's Syria were marked. Corruption from the head of state infected the nation. Many of the people resembled Hamlets or Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns. Either, like Hamlet, they found their world and responsibilities bewildering, or like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern they were little spokes joined to a big wheel which if it broke would destroy them. Obliquely I drew comparisons between Denmark and Syria. Some understood and were knowingly silent; others studiously and carefully avoided understanding. The majority were not linguistically good enough to move beyond language to theme. If, however, most of my students did not see, or refused to acknowledge, the contemporary significance of *Hamlet*, I could not avoid it. During the first term I faced no important academic questions. Although I was teaching at a lower level than I had taught before, I knew that what I was doing was useful. English was the language of science, medicine, business, and diplomacy. Like a technician I was teaching a skill my students could use. In contrast, *Hamlet* forced me to confront the relevancy of literature to life, a subject which I had always avoided in the United States because it seemed beside the point. Was my teaching *Hamlet*, which universalized and indirectly examined the problems Syrians faced, one of the most meaningful things I had ever done in a classroom? Or was teaching literature and discussing Hamlet's inaction while people were dying on the streets one of the most meaningless things I ever did? I never decided.

Throughout the turmoil, my relationship with the students was constant. On Easter I received several cards. My Moslem students knew that

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it was an occasion for a Christian feast, but most were not sure which one. One card read, "Merry Christmas to My Sincerely Teacher." When my wife became ill in late April, eight Moslem girls, all wrapped in scarves and long coats, came to our apartment with armfuls of flowers. On the last day of class, students asked me to autograph their books. There were tears, reluctant farewells, and assertions of lasting friendship. The year had been difficult; I made almost no adult friends. I had done no research. The seven hundred examinations I graded in July convinced me that half my students would never complete their studies and the bright dreams and hopes they shared with me would wither. No Fulbright lecturer would follow me to Latakia and most of what I had accomplished with even my best students would be swiftly erased.

I went to Syria when my professional career seemed at a crossroads. A university press had accepted my second book. My articles appeared in the better literary quarterlies, and journals were beginning to write me soliciting essays. When I was in Syria, my professional work had to be shunted aside; unseized opportunities passed on to other people. Was the year worth it? I am not sure, but when I left, a student presented a poem she had written to me. Although it was embarrassingly fulsome, its sentiment touched me and almost made me glad I had spent the year in Syria. "Like the effect of sunset," she wrote, "Like the gone of the moon, / Like shadwos spreading in space, / Like storms which destroy everything / Like all these things your leaving will be. / Your leaving will fill our hearts with sadness and dullness. / Your leaving will take the dynamic thing from our life. / Maybe my words is very big for the situation, / But that is really what I feel and the truth. / So you have the right by getting back home again, / But we havn't the right to possess whom we loved. / God bless you, our wonderful teacher. / God help you with your coming life. / God take care of you and your wife fore ever. / I want of you just to remember that there are / Students loves you and think of you forever."

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The Myth

D. M. THOMAS

My dead father was coming! Thrilled, I said, *Lord!*
I hope I don't run out of things to say,
like when my sister came home, after twenty years,
and I ran out of words on the drive from the airport.

All the same, my sleep bloomed autumn in winter,
I was dreaming in bronze, while rain was beating my house.
He would love these English colors; and yet, I knew,
New England in the fall was also vivid.

When we met, I told him the good news;
the Reds had beaten Camborne, the old enemy.
Catching a high kick, the blind fullback
burst through to score the winning try.

I was pleased, but not thrilled as I would have been
in the days when we watched together.
Though in some ways I'm still the boy my father
thrilled with the myth of the great prewar team.

The news was more a way of breaking the ice.
His harrowed face cracked into a smile,
as if he was pleased, but not thrilled;
as if the years made it remote from him also . . .

When I awoke, I thought much about life
and eternal life, and the blind fullback
racing up by instinct to field the high
garryowen and bursting through to win the match.

✪ D. M. THOMAS is a British poet whose most recent collection is *The Honeymoon Voyage.*

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Some Academics, Mainly in Chicago

EDWARD SHILS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN THE EARLY 1930s was a wonderful place for a young man without social airs and without social ambitions, poor, rather ignorant, serious, and intellectual, launched on a quest without knowing what he was looking for. It was a great place for me to grope with confidence that I would not go astray.

It was a very different kind of place from what I had imagined a university to be. Even as an undergraduate I had still thought of a university as a place where the professors knew clearly what was right and what was not right. Perhaps that was because I retained from my tenth year the belief that the knowable was finite and that genuine professors had mastered that; perhaps it was because I had formed, from what sources I do not know, the notion that German professors were the true professors, the very idea of professors, and German professors, I thought, were dogmatic and commanding. That was not the way it was in Chicago.

The two best men at Chicago at that time were always tentative and disarming by their tentativeness. They were both men of very clearly formed character. One of them could be querulous and as persistent in a discussion as a bulldog; he was sharp and subtle and had an exceptional acumen in detecting contradictions in others' and in his own positions. While he always complained about the errors of others, he never ceased to confess his own ignorance. He had an exasperated certainty when he referred to what was unlikely to be true, but when it came to the truth of his own assertions he was modest to the point of humility. The other professor who brought me at once into his vast, bewildering intellectual universe was like a bear—built like a bear, hunched over like a bear, putting his nose into everything like a bear, and growling and grunting like a bear. The first was Frank Knight; the second was Robert Park.

When I came to Chicago on September 22, 1932, Park was prowling about in the Orient and Frank Knight was in the depths of a deep depression about the state of and prospects for liberalism. When the 1932 presidential campaign was coming to an end, the Communist Club an-

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nounced that Frank Knight would lecture under its auspices on "An Ex-Liberal Looks at Communism." I do not know what the officers of the Communist Club could have been thinking of when they asked Knight to speak. Did they think that Knight would announce his conversion to Communism? They might have done so because many intellectuals in the United States were then turning in that direction, prefiguring the policy which the Communist party would follow in the second part of the decade—that the party should attach to its retinue as many intellectuals as possible, whatever their views, as long as they would be willing to be associated, however loosely, with the Communist party and as long as they would attack the existing regimes of the Western countries. The head of the Communist Club was a square-faced, bespectacled student of divinity. His was no great brain. He seemed to be an earnest, ignorant, and simple fellow with a tone of righteousness; he was a forerunner of many a defecting clergyman in the decades to come.

The meeting was to be held at 8:00 P.M. in the large lecture room in the Social Science Research Building. As was characteristic of rooms in that building in the evening, it was stiflingly hot, the lights were dim, and the radiators clanked in a fitful and lugubrious way for most of the evening. Frank Knight, whom I had never seen before, came in timorously yet defiantly—I later saw this combination of qualities quite often. He was wearing a dark woolen shirt, a sombre necktie. He was bald and had a closely clipped, bristling little gray mustache. He wore silver-framed spectacles. His face was pink and round yet with nothing soft about it. He looked like a very intelligent little rodent, rather adorable to look at but well capable of giving one a nip which would not soon be forgotten.

The room was nearly full when Frank Knight entered. He walked toward the front, sat down in a seat on the aisle, and waited. No one came over to speak to him, or seemed even to take notice of him. The students, most of whom were undoubtedly not Communists or fellow travelers, obviously came with the expectation of hearing something very interesting. I had the impression that they did not recognize Knight. Since I myself was new at the university, I did not know anyone except for one friend who was a great admirer of Knight and who pointed him out to me.

I can no longer recall what Knight said in any detail, but the main point of his lecture was an affirmation of the principles of liberalism—individual freedom, rational choice and action, rational discussion to settle political disagreements, the functioning of the competitive market as the most productive, the freest, and the socially most beneficial mode of organization of economic life. Communism was tyranny; it, like nationalism, appealed to what was basest in the human mind, the mob

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spirit. Knight said not a word in favor of communism, except that liberalism had proved itself untenable because human beings were incapable of rational thought, even about their own advantage; they did not wish to act on their own responsibility. They wanted leaders who would comfort them with illusions and who would make unrealizable promises to them. They wanted to subordinate themselves; they wanted the security of being part of a mob and of sharing in the mob spirit.

Knight said there had been a time when it looked as if mankind, having advanced toward freeing itself from tradition, superstition, and despotism, had turned toward the ideal of a free society. It had become clear, however, that mankind did not wish to live in freedom and according to the light of reason. He spoke with sombre regret about the failure of education, including higher education, to overcome the human desire for self-deception and its readiness to turn its problems over to demagogic leaders for solutions. That was why communism—in which he seemed to include fascism—appeared to be on the verge of triumph in the world. He spoke about this with genuine grief and painful bitterness, although there were many sardonic remarks and sober bits of rural wisdom at which some students laughed. He blamed no individuals. He thought that the human race was just not up to living in a free society. He criticized liberalism because it had not understood the limited powers of human beings and it had also not seen the potentialities for deterioration in its own ideals—the fact that competition was not between equals and that it contained the danger of monopoly, or that discussion tends to deteriorate into argument and propaganda in which the objective is victory rather than truth.

But it was not so much what Frank Knight said that impressed me or even the oddity of this profound and honest man speaking under the auspices of a band of novices naive in intellectual dishonesty and chicanery. There was much in it which I could not fathom, since his kind of clear-minded liberalism, so trenchantly asserted, was new to me. What impressed me was a man so honest that he could reason himself into paralyzing uncertainties, an idealist so lofty in his aspirations that anything that fell short of them was oppressive disappointment. Yet all the while he was humble about his own ignorance, deep in his understanding of human imperfections.

Frank Knight did not mention sociology in that lecture. When I began to attend his courses the next year, he never mentioned sociology or sociologists, except for Max Weber. Although he had not himself studied very much sociology—he was by training an economist—Frank Knight offered a great deal to a sociologist. He had reflected profoundly about the market and he was aware that the behavior of human beings was not exhaustively described when one had described the market. He saw, too,

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that the operation of the market depended on certain conditions, such as the family, which were not part of it, and that it produced consequences which were inimical to its further working as a competitive market. He was also a stringent critic of behaviorism (which then as now had fanatical proponents), of ethical positivism, of scientism (which he called "scienticism") long before Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper were pointing out its deficiencies.

I was entranced by Knight. His grim humor was an additional merit but the main thing was his curiosity, his freedom from cant, and his refusal to accept mealymouthed intellectual compromises and reluctances. He was terribly difficult to come to grips with in an argument; arguing with him was like wrestling with an intellectual porcupine.

Frank Knight was a ruminator, a mutterer, a brooder. He was obsessed by a vision of society but his mind ranged over an immense field. He was an individualist who saw the limits of individualism, a rationalist who saw the limitations of rationality and its meager prospect of universal adoption. He was preoccupied by religion, although he was not a believer. He was a writer of extraordinary clarity on particular points; he had a lucid and mordant wit. A genuine liberal—not at all a collectivistic liberal—he used nevertheless to say that "one cannot twist the tails of the sacred cows of society," by which he meant that humanity will resist the invasion of reason and scientific knowledge into those domains that it thinks are sacred. He read omnivorously, and captiously annotated everything he read—underscoring, refuting, and lining the margins of the pages with exclamation points and question marks.

Frank Knight said many things which at the time I could not understand. Yet even some of what I could not understand I was certain contained much which ought to be understood and which I might be able to understand later. This in fact has turned out to be the case. For example, one Sunday he was at lunch with us in a flat which I then shared with two older graduate students. There arose some question about the correction of one or another defect in American society. In the unthinking idiom of the day—which I employed unthinkingly—I said that it was necessary to fight to bring about the desired change. I did not mean violent fighting; in fact I did not mean anything except persistence, but I had not really thought hard about what I did mean. Knight, in his cranky, whining way, expostulated: "But that is just what is wrong; it can't be done by fighting!" I can't even now convey the implications of this statement as I received, it but it moved my mind a little further toward the idea of the moral consensus around which Robert Park, too, had been circling.

I attended most of Frank Knight's lecture courses and seminars for a number of years. Much of what he said escaped me, either because I did

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not have a good enough understanding of economic theory or because he spoke of it with such oblique subtlety and so inaudibly that I could not always follow him. But now and then I caught sight of the paradoxes of existence which were always in the forefront of his mind. He was not an easy man to be with. There was certainly no small talk between us; he was about a quarter of a century older than I was at a time when such a discrepancy still made a difference. In any case, we never talked about private matters; our conversations proceeded by my timorously asking him his opinion about some ill-formulated problem or by his speaking about what preoccupied him, which were almost always the same things: the obduracy of human beings to reason as manifested in the persistence of Christianity, or of the tariff, or, later, of Marxism; the terrible difficulty of applying reason because of the uncertainty of the passage from abstract principles to more particular propositions; the vexingly inevitable ambiguity in the application of rules; the absence of any better alternative to the judgment of a wise and experienced person, and the rational inadequacy of this position.

This is no fair account of the strenuous and impassioned exertion of the mind which I witnessed in Frank Knight, and of his inability or unwillingness to reconcile himself to the imperfections of the human race, which he saw with such unhappy clarity. Not long before his death a young colleague met him on the street and asked him what he was writing. He replied that he had stopped writing, and when asked how he spent his time, he replied, "Meditating on the follies of the human race." He never lost his rationalistic impatience with those follies.

Frank Knight was brought up by God-fearing parents who were adherents of an intellectually narrow sect—the Plymouth Brethren. On one side of his character Knight was a thoroughgoing antinomian who no longer expected the coming of the Millennium. His antinomianism went further than that of the Plymouth Brethren because he was very anti-Christian and hostile to all religion, which, like Clarence Darrow and other freethinkers of the older generation, he regarded as the epitome of superstition. Yet he studied Scripture, read theological books constantly, and two theologians at the University of Chicago were among his closest friends. In his old age—he died well into his eighties—I once inquired about his health and he told me that he was very tired and slept very poorly. When I gave him some of my home remedies for falling asleep, he said, "No, it's not that I can't fall asleep. It's just that I wake up in the middle of the night and think about religion. It's that damned religion. I just can't get it out of my mind."

Knight was an economic theorist who in his time was one of the great figures of his subject. His doctoral dissertation became a classic. Many of his papers on interest and capital were studied by economists every-

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where and greatly appreciated as among the important writings on these subjects in the history of the discipline. He complained bitterly against the failure of institutional economists to understand economic theory, but he was also preoccupied with the limited intellectual and ethical jurisdiction of economic theory. This was one of the reasons for his interest in Max Weber.

Knight was surely one of the first persons in the English-speaking world to be attracted to Weber's efforts to supplement economic theory with sociology. He translated Weber's *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* when Weber was only slightly known in the English-speaking world for his famous essay on the Protestant ethic and the origins of capitalism. He knew German well—his thesis for the degree of master of arts at the University of Tennessee in 1912 was on Gerhart Hauptmann. In about 1935 or 1936 he announced a seminar on Max Weber. The members at first were Milton Friedman, George Stigler, Allen Wallis, Herbert Goldhamer, Michael Sapir (the son of Edward Sapir, one of the best linguists and cultural anthropologists of the time), and I. I think that most of the others, except for Herbert Goldhamer and me, attended irregularly or ceased coming after a while. The procedure was a line-by-line reading of the first three chapters of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, with comments by Knight and a few hesitant observations by me. I myself studied the text every day; I was overpowered when the perspectives opened up by Weber's concepts brought together things which hitherto had never seemed to me to have any affinity with each other. I could not assimilate it all or bring it into a satisfying order. But reading Max Weber was literally breathtaking. Sometimes, in the midst of reading him, I had to stand up and walk around for a minute or two until my exhilaration died down.

I also began to go to John Nef's lectures on the economic history of England. Nef lectured mainly from the proofs of his fine book on the coal industry in Great Britain, and I was dazzled by his learning, his general literary and artistic culture, and the orderliness of his lectures. He offered more material than I could absorb. It appeared to me to be the kind of thing which sociology ought to be: the study of the interconnections and the inner workings of institutions. I also attended, for some reason I cannot recall, the lectures of Harry Millis on labor organizations, labor legislation, and the like. Not knowing what sociology was supposed to be, at least as understood by sociologists, I thought it should be about whole societies—as in Werner Sombart's *Der moderne Kapitalismus* and Mikhail Rostovtzeff's *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, both of which I assumed to fall within the province of sociology. I went to a course with Ernest Burgess in a long, dark gothic room in the east tower of Harper Library. Ernest Burgess was a gentle little

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man, with a soft, shy smile. He spoke in a whisper. The course was centered on the Park and Burgess text, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology,* which I had heard referred to as "the green bible." It was a huge book consisting of long passages by all sorts of writers from many countries. Each chapter was preceded by an introduction and at the end there were topics for further inquiry and a long bibliography which testified to the extraordinary range of Park's reading. Burgess went through it chapter by chapter, expounding it in a way which showed that his heart was elsewhere.

On one occasion, I spoke up in class and mentioned Emile Durkheim, whose writings were still fresh in my mind after my short but exhaustive study of his books and articles several years before. I do not know what the point was. I suppose that I was simply showing off, since Durkheim had never held my sociological affections. But that interpellation made me a marked man among the students. Imagine a student who could read French and who did so even though he did not have to! After that class, one of its members, a stocky, broad-shouldered man about thirty-five or forty years old, with an aquiline nose and shining black hair, came up to me, remarked on my mention of Durkheim, and asked if we could walk home together. I was flattered by his attention; he was obviously a European and I had never spoken with an educated European before, although I had revered them from across the ocean. He told me that he was Dr. Josef Davidsohn, and when he gave me his card—until then I thought that only businessmen had cards—I saw that he was *Privatdozent* in sociology at the University of Copenhagen. I felt close to Copenhagen, having studied Georg Brandes's writings and with whose *Recollections of My Childhood and Youth* and essays on Kierkegaard, Drachmann, and other gloomy Danes I was intimate. Davidsohn was also a gloomy Dane, very grave and courteous. I guess that he was homesick for a bit of Europe and the closest thing to Europe the poor man could have was a young man who knew Durkheim's writings (at this time the only work of Durkheim's in English was *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*). When he went back to Denmark at the end of the year, he gave me as fond a farewell as only a timid man in far from congenial company could give to a person with whom he had no affinity other than a shared knowledge of Durkheim. From Copenhagen he sent me a copy of his *Habilitationsschrift,* on Durkheim, and there our contact ceased. Nearly thirty years later, Fröde Jakobson, who had been the commanding general of the Danish Home Army during the Nazi occupation, told me, in response to my inquiry, that Davidsohn and his wife, both of whom were his friends, had committed suicide one night while the Home Army was attempting to smuggle them out of the country into Sweden.

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I had become acquainted with Louis Wirth on my first day in Chicago. I had read Wirth's *The Ghetto* while I was an undergraduate and liked it; I had also looked over his annotated bibliography in *The City*, a book of essays on urban sociology which had been assembled by Park and Burgess with important contributions by both of them. Wirth's bibliography was intoxicating. It mentioned so many interesting works about every aspect of urban life throughout the world and, having come to Chicago from a year of enthusiastic weltschmerz in New York, I was fascinated by it and by all the great cities of the world. Park and Simmel, two sociologists, grasped exactly what riveted the imagination of youth about cities.

Wirth was a small man, plump without being fat. He had rounded cheeks, a chin and a nose like small cones; his brow and the top of his head also formed a cone. He had a sweet smile and an extraordinarily mellifluous voice. He told me that he had recently returned from Germany—as far as I was concerned, no experience could have been more desirable. The Nazis were not yet in power and I occasionally allowed myself the luxury of a daydream of studying in Germany. It was ridiculous. I had no money and in the Depression no prospect of having any. I had come to Chicago with the generous backing of an enthusiastic friend, himself nearly impecunious, and was soon supporting myself as a social worker in the Black Belt, working for the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare.

Meeting Wirth was, for me, to be in contact with Germany. To be in contact with German universities was to be in contact with the great tradition of learning. Not that I felt elevated by anything that Wirth said. He told me that in Frankfurt he had visited Karl Mannheim, who was very interested in American sociology. Wirth asked me if I knew about Mannheim, whose articles I had seen in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*. Of course, I knew about him, but I had to answer that I had not read anything by him; I said that I intended to do so. I told Wirth that I had thought of submitting a monograph in the competition on the sociology of knowledge conducted by the Viennese Sociological Society but had dropped the idea. This was true, but I did not tell him that I had been spending my time studying Sorel with the intention of writing a book on him. (The only result of this was the introduction to a reprinting of Hulme's translation of the *Réflexions sur la violence* which I published nearly two decades later.) The interview with Wirth ended pleasantly. It was the first time that I had ever had a conversation about an intellectual subject with a professor. At the University of Pennsylvania, professors—at least those that I studied under as an undergraduate—did not speak to students outside of class and the students did not expect them to do so. This was not the way it was at Chicago.

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I did not see Louis Wirth again until January 1933 when I began to attend his course—at 8:00 A.M. three mornings a week—on the history of sociology, or the history of German sociology, I forget which. The course was one of the oddest I ever attended. The texts for the class were the three little green-bound volumes of Franz Oppenheimer's and Gottfried Salomon's *Soziologische Lesestücke.* Wirth would come into a room in the Social Science Research Building which had a large oval table, and make a few desultory comments; then on most days he would begin to read excerpts from one of the little volumes—in German. Sometimes he would read a whole page, sometimes more. He did this throughout the hour. There must have been some days when he spoke on his own for most of the hour, but I do not recall any of them. He sometimes made rather good comments, linking the passage read with the work of some other sociologist. I think I was probably the only member of the class who read German fairly well, and I also had the advantage of having the text in front of me while it was being read. Yet the students adored Wirth and not least for his reading to them in German, even though they could not understand what he was reading. They thought him a true scholar. In fact, he often said some clever things and I learned something about *Volksgeist* from the course.

In about June 1933, at a public meeting of social workers at the Goodman Theater, Louis Wirth asked me if I wished to be his research assistant. He said he had received some money for a study of "the methodological presuppositions of German sociology." Being a social worker, I occasionally went to meetings at Hull House and elsewhere, where the inadequate public provision for the unemployed was discussed. Louis Wirth himself had been a family caseworker for the Jewish Charities of Chicago before he went to teach sociology at Tulane, and he took an intense interest in social problems; his wife was a leading social worker. It was inspiring to be asked to accept such an honor. Although the acceptance of the appointment would require a reduction of my monthly income from $125.00 to $86.11, I had no hesitation. I was crossing the barrier between the outside and the inside. I have for most of my life had a sensitive imagination for that barrier—the invisible line separating periphery and center—and I thought that I was now in the process of passing over the line. I did not think that it was any merit of mine which had brought it about, and I had no idea of what the research could consist of. It was unprecedented to be pitched onto the peak of the sociological Parnassus. *Voraussetzungen*—presuppositions—was a very high-toned word among those of my undergraduate friends who knew a few words of German. (Theodore Mommsen was the first to speak of *voraussetzungslose Wissenschaft* at the beginning of the century.) It was the very center of intellectual activity to be aware of one's "presuppositions."

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Here I was about to enter this vital domain of my heart's desire.

It did not work out very well. Louis Wirth was very kind, but he could never tell me what I should do. I read countless books and essays and formed an intimacy with German social science which remains with me—not to any great intellectual benefit, except insofar as it made me intimate with a great period of modern intellectual history. Even now when I speak or correspond with a young German scholar working on some aspect of German academic history, I am sometimes asked whether I lived in Germany at that time—the period before the First World War!

Several things of importance happened in my early years at the University of Chicago. The first was that I began to study Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in dead earnest, as well as his political and, of course, his methodological writings. His writings on religion came a little later. The other was that I attended the last course given by Robert Park in Rosenwald Hall, which was entitled "Collective Behavior." I remember Park growling as he paced up and back across the front of the room. He always looked into the distance when he spoke; he spoke slowly as if he were reading out his thoughts from a distant script which he could not easily decipher. Sometimes he spoke as if from the midst of the things he was talking about. He did not lecture to us; we were just present while he pondered aloud on what he had seen or was seeing while he spoke. Yet this course must have been partly a seminar, because I delivered a paper there on the socialist and communist movements—the course gave much attention to social movements since these were of major interest to Park. The presentation was a success and Park singled me out for special attention. That is the way he was. If a student's subject interested him, he did not limit his interest to the classroom.

Park spoke from time to time of consensus, of social unity such as exists in a mob with a common mood, or *Stimmung*. He thought that the mob or crowd, released from the control of institutions, manifested certain features of "emotional unity" which were fundamental in the life of society under more ordinary circumstances. In his idea of moral order, inchoately expounded by him and inchoately apprehended by me, he went more deeply into the fundamental substratum of the bonds which form individuals into societies than any other sociologist of his time or since.

Park combined this brooding reflectiveness about the basis of society with a passionate sensitivity to the humble facts of ordinary life. He loved to walk the streets to watch ordinary human beings, to strike up conversations with them, to ask them questions, and to ponder on their lives. When a student did a dissertation under him, he lived in that student's subject, imposed himself on the student, went to the district

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where the student was doing his fieldwork, adding his own observation to the student's. He cross-examined his students and thought aloud with them about the things he and they had observed. If a graduate student worked on an interesting subject—usually a subject suggested by him—he interested himself unrestrainedly in the student's work. That is how it happened that important studies were published from the dissertations which he supervised by authors who never afterward wrote anything of any interest whatsoever. He had no reservations about telling a student, "I am interested in you." He once said that to me.

If students faltered, Park kept after them with kindness and sometimes with brutality. One graduate student in the department, a Negro, had formerly been a policeman in a large city of the Northwest; he had aroused the interest of one of Park's former students, who was then teaching at a university in that area and who sent this man to work under Park for an advanced degree. He was a thick-chested, large man, of the shape which used to be characteristic of American policemen; he was also a jovial person, quite clever, and Park wanted to make something of him. Park farmed him out to another professor who was writing a book on Negro politicians, and the former policeman did much of the fieldwork but he was not always a faithful worker; there were periods when he was indolent, too convivial, or pursued women. One day Park took him to task for his neglect of his duties and his waste of his talents. He launched into the student—then a man of about thirty-five. He started with reprimands, then began to shout at him, and finally the man burst into tears. There the interview ended and the crushed object of Park's censure went back to his room, much the worse for the encounter. About an hour later, Park appeared at the man's door, to cheer him up and to apologize for having spoken to him so roughly. He explained himself by saying that the student would benefit by the hiding he had received. "Conflict brings out what's in a man" was his final consolation to the sorry fellow.

Park was not a lucid expositor of his own ideas; he proceeded by giving hints about glimpses, but his growling ruminations about what he glimpsed were so vivid and so emphatic, so many-sided, that I understood things from him which he never said. After the class he would walk home, about three-quarters of a mile from the university. I often accompanied him and he thought aloud all the way. Having been in the Orient for much of the previous year, he would tell me about what he had seen there and what it signified. Rickshaw pullers, small merchants, priests and temple custodians, gamblers—everybody and everything interested him. He also wandered about the streets of Chicago in districts through which he had tramped in the past, observing and reflecting unceasingly. He spoke to me with horror of what he had just seen on the West Side. In

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what was then the idiom of American sociology, he spoke to me with horrified astonishment of some of the younger inhabitants of one of those areas: "They have no norms; they have no norms at all." He did not intend to be prophetic but he was. I said very little in response to the interesting things he told me.

Although retired after this last course, Park continued to come to the department of sociology on most days, and I saw a lot of him because he came frequently into Louis Wirth's room while we were revising my translation of Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie*, which Wirth had asked me to do. (This had become a substitute for the "methodological presuppositions . . ." which soon ran into the ground because neither Wirth nor I knew what we were looking for.) Park would come into Wirth's room several times each day when he was at the university, usually very excited about some new aspect of an old idea which had occurred to him while reading or writing. He continued to read the most miscellaneous books which seemed to bear on his interest in the unity of the crowd, the normative element in human action, the composition of conformity, the incessant disruptions of order in every sphere of social life. He never sat down, but paced back and forth in the small room, in a lumbering ursine movement, gesticulating with both hands outstretched in front of his chest, moving up and down. I cannot recall the things he said, but I received from those frequent interruptions a sense of Park's unquenchable wonderment and curiosity. I also came to understand why Park's writings are so incoherent. Wherever an idea came to him in the course of writing it, he transferred it to conversation, talking until he used up his stimulation. He would then go back to his manuscripts and would begin again where the conversation had left off. I am not certain of this, but after seeing him in action so often in this way and reading his penetrating but discontinuous essays, this explanation seems plausible to me.

In about 1935 or 1936, Park went to live at Fisk University, where his beloved pupil Charles Johnson was professor and later president. He had a special interest in black men and women and had lived in Tuskegee for some time as Booker T. Washington's associate, writing much of Washington's famous autobiography, *Up from Slavery*. I did not see him again except very briefly. He died in 1944 while I was away from Chicago but he left a most formative impression on my way of looking at society and societies.

One day in the summer of 1936 Louis Wirth came down into the room in the Social Science Building which Herbert Goldhamer and I shared. He was accompanied by Talcott Parsons. The first thing that struck me about Parsons was the look of refinement on his face, which

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was not common among sociologists. He looked well-bred, and gave the impression of pacific concentration of mind. Most sociologists looked very ill-assorted. They were no longer clergymen; they were not businessmen; they were gawky, awkward country boys, however old they were. Parsons looked a little like a genteel easterner, although, like many sociologists, he too came from the Middle West, having been born in Ohio.

Talcott Parsons was very conscious of his mission to bring intellectual order into sociology, but he was neither priggish nor arrogant. By 1936 he was well on the road to the completion of the first stage of his journey and he knew that he had traveled a great distance. In the summer term of 1937 he came to teach at Chicago, and the huge typescript of his *The Structure of Social Action* accompanied him. It was already complete; he lectured with parts of the typescript in front of him but he did not look at it. He spoke very slowly in a low, dry monotone, as from a vision. He spoke with some pride and with confident modesty of his intellectual accomplishment in demonstrating, with great meticulousness and rigor, the structure of traditions behind Durkheim, Weber, Pareto, and Alfred Marshall. He also spoke with pride of his observations of the relations between physicians and patients. The association with the highest stratum of the New England medical profession at the Massachusetts General Hospital, which he had studied so closely, had entered into his self-confidence.

Until *The Structure of Social Action* was completed, Talcott Parsons knew exactly where he was going. When it was over he did not stop, but his direction became less clear. This was the time when he wrote his best things on relatively particular subjects—on social stratification, on kinship and family, on age in the United States, and on the rise of totalitarian nationalist movements. These were excellent essays and sociological in the best sense, but the extent to which they were guided by, or subsumed under, explicit and abstract theoretical ideas was rather slight.

A few years later, Parsons's paper on social stratification brought us a little closer together. He had sent the paper to the *American Journal of Sociology* with a view to publication. Ernest Burgess, who was then the editor, asked me to read it for the *Journal*. I did so, writing about twenty foolscap pages of sharply critical comments and suggestions for revision in content, style, and organization. It was toward the end of the 1930s, and I was myself very much engaged in the study of social stratification and had a few not wholly commonplace ideas on the subject which I put into suggestions for Parsons's revision. Not long afterward we were together traveling on a train from Detroit to Chicago after a meeting. Talcott Parsons and I went to the dining car for a cup of coffee. He thanked me as warmly as it was in his very restrained nature to do for my com-

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ments on and proposed revisions of his paper, and he said that he had accepted them all. He did not mention the subject of the paper and I did not at first know what he was referring to. Then, as he continued, I recalled his paper on social stratification and my comments, and I was a little anxious because I recalled that some of them were rather censorious, even harsh. I therefore pretended that I was being mistakenly thanked for someone else's labors. He was not to be dissuaded by my dissimulation, however, and told me that Ernest Burgess had sent him my criticisms and suggestions and that he had recognized my handwriting and the yellow foolscap legal paper on which he knew that I always wrote. I tell this long-winded story to underscore the point that Talcott Parsons was one of the humblest and least vain of men of genuine intellectual accomplishments.

Talcott Parsons was a saint of sociology; his life was consecrated to it. He had a vision of social action which he sought ceaselessly to differentiate and to unify. He was a good man in all his relationships, but sociology was the center of his concern. Not an insight here and a cleared area there but a unified understanding of society was the ambition which dominated him. During the time when we collaborated on *Toward a General Theory of Action*, we often worked until midnight discussing and drafting, discussing and redrafting; then often as early as seven o'clock in the morning of the next day, he would be on the telephone with me, raising a question about what we had done the preceding day, suggesting a new formulation, a new distinction, or a new connection which we had failed to make. He sought to find systemic patterns and the interconnectedness of all things in society, and yet he never lost any of the modesty which I noticed in him on the first day we met. When toward the last years of his life all sorts of miscreants took to abusing him for being a reactionary, a "servant of the interests," he never once complained. He was saddened but never embittered. He never slackened in his devotion to his calling. Max Weber would have appreciated him as a *Berufsmensch* who did not lose his depth of vision.

No account of the intellectual atmosphere in which I lived in Chicago in the 1930s would be complete without a few words about Harold Lasswell, who has recently died. By the time I first came to Chicago, he was already fairly high in the firmament of the social sciences—at least in Chicago. He had written a brilliant doctoral dissertation on *Propaganda Technique in the World War* and he had also published, in 1930, *Psychopathology and Politics,* which he wrote when he was about twenty-seven. I had read it when I was an undergraduate. At that time, I was not interested in psychoanalysis, but any author who knew about Robert Michels, Max Weber, Mosei Ostrogorsky, as Lasswell did, was

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obviously a man for me. At the University of Chicago, I came into contact with him only after some delay. I knew a number of his students and I was put off by them. They spoke in extremely obscure, very portentous language of things which I thought I knew much better than they did. None of them read German and French as well as I did—if they read them at all—and they therefore knew the work of the authors they spoke about only through having heard about them from Lasswell.

When I first heard Lasswell lecture in one of the public lecture series of the division of the social sciences I was put off by his deliberate pose of omniscience, conveyed with an amusingly diabolical archness. Yet I could not deny that not only did he seem to think that he was the real thing but that in fact he was the real thing. As far as I was concerned, he too was a man of the great world. Europe and the Soviet Union were objects of easy reference to him. He had gone to Europe in the first half of the 1920s and he took special pleasure in not being a Middle Western yokel. Before his students, he referred to European politicians as if he knew them personally without at the same time saying anything specific about any meeting with them which could be confirmed or denied.

In fact, Lasswell came from a pious and respectable family in southern Illinois. His father was a clergyman, his mother a schoolteacher. Both parents lived with him in a small philistine house near the university. None of us was ever allowed to visit him there and once, when we returned from a long night in an Italian restaurant on Taylor Street, he would not permit the cabman to pull up in front of the house; he insisted on stopping about thirty yards away. Religion never entered his thoughts except as an object of psychoanalytic interpretation. I was at first surprised, and then not surprised, to learn after his death that in later years he became convinced of the reality of occult phenomena. He read in all fields of social science and history and affected intimacy with all; but he was, in fact, intimate with quite a number of them. He was in the great tradition of those thinkers who looked forward to the time when social science would guide society to a hitherto unattained state of social and psychological well-being. He did not allow himself to give any appearance of moral concern, and it is very likely that at this time his moral sensibility was extremely faint. He liked to appear as a cold-blooded social-scientific surgeon, delighting in designing social arrangements for the attainment of indeterminate ends.

Although he was only in his early thirties when I first met him, Harold Lasswell's closely cut and somewhat bristling hair was a mixture of gray and black. His black eyebrows, always raised when he spoke, his smile of pursed lips, his sharply pointed nose, thick at the middle and narrow and sharp at the end, and his grin—as if he were in conspiracy with his audience in an immense unspoken "leg-pull"—all gave him a

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devilish tone. He was kind and even affectionate, although shyness hidden by a cascade of words and his hints of being on the inside of all sorts of things gave a different impression.

Lasswell had a genuine reverence for Robert Park. Park was a man who knew the world as a journalist in Detroit, as a student at Michigan, Berlin, Heidelberg, and Strassburg, as an assistant of William James at Harvard, as a wanderer and seeker who has no pretenses and whose earnestness forbade any pretenses. Park was always open to whatever was "interesting"—one of his most frequently used adjectives. It was evidence of Lasswell's genuine intellectual discrimination that he took to Park in a way that he took to none of his elders—and for the right reasons. He also admired Frank Knight very much but he kept his distance from him. Knight abominated scientism; he was contemptuous of the pretensions of social scientists to be scientists, and he was very capable in acrimonious disputation. Lasswell, with all his effort to appear imperturbable and beyond any ordinary sensibility or hurt, was, I think, reluctant to be put into a position in which he would have to face Knight's often extremely offensive complaints about the intellectual ineptitude of his interlocutors.

I find it hard to estimate the significance which Harold Lasswell had for me. I doubt whether I acquired any fundamental insight from him, such as I acquired from Robert Park and Frank Knight. Lasswell's view of society, as I encountered it in the 1930s, was much under the influence of Pareto married to Freud. For him, politics was a struggle for power and what could be acquired through the use of power. Nothing was stable; elites were in continuous circulation. Lasswell's view was the Hobbesian view tempered by the psychoanalytic theory of identification which brought individuals otherwise isolated from each other into groups, which then pitted their collective strength against each other by whatever means they had available and which they thought they could apply successfully. All beliefs were ideologies. The psychoanalytic theory was put into the service of the theory of *homo homini lupus*. Lasswell's was a unique amalgam which was made before the popularization of Freud and Marx. The individual authors who went into Lasswell's synthesis were all known to me and I liked neither the intellectual result nor the moral overtones of the synthesis. But I learned something from it nonetheless. I was certainly made more aware of the possibilities of psychoanalytic interpretations, and it was in the atmosphere which he created that I was led to study this theory sympathetically and hence to take from it what little I still retain in my thoughts.

Like Park and unlike Knight in his economic writings and Parsons in all his writings, Lasswell was not gifted with the capacity of continuous, logically coherent exposition. His extraordinary fluency was not in char-

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acter with the brokenness of his written exposition. Lasswell's two main books, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* and *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How*, both published in the middle of the 1930s, were not well-rounded expositions of his outlook on society. In fact, he never succeeded in writing such a book. Nevertheless, for me these two books were extraordinarily beneficial. The very fact that the books were unsystematic—unlike his later book on power and society and the numerous works which he published after he became professor at the Law School of Yale University—permitted him a freedom of imagination and insight which greater ratiocinative inclinations and powers would have inhibited.

Like Knight and Park, Lasswell was a great teacher. Unfortunately his pedagogical fruitfulness ended early. He left the University of Chicago in 1938 after Robert Hutchins refused to approve of his promotion to a full professorship. For about six years he had a marginal existence on the edge of federal government agencies and he saw some hard times; the strength of his facade helped to keep his interior structure from crumbling. Fortunately for him, he came into contact with Professor Myres MacDougall, a distinguished international lawyer at Yale. He spent the rest of his career at Yale, producing many books but adding little to wisdom or knowledge. The Yale law students were interested in the traditional Yale training as the precondition for large incomes gained through work on behalf of business. Lasswell attracted relatively few of them; his students and collaborators became mainly foreign students who were not of a high quality, and the stimulation which he had gained at Chicago from his clever, hardworking students who really believed in his Paretian-Freudian synthesis was no longer there.

Of course, no one knows what would have happened to him had he stayed at Chicago, but I regret bitterly that he did not, for his sake and for mine. Lasswell and I were at first very wary of each other. Later on—after 1936—I became relatively well-acquainted and friendly with him. Bit by bit I came to like him until, after several decades, I came to feel a real affection for him. But from 1935 onward, we began to deal with each other as two sovereign powers—he a larger state, I a smaller one, even though he was already a prolific author and an associate professor and I a poorly paid assistant who had published little more than nothing. After the Second World War, I came to feel very warmly toward him, with an affection based on recollections of a treasured experience shared many years before. Unfortunately, by this time he was confirmed in a schematic, utopian belief in the feasibility of social engineering. I thought that if he had remained in Chicago, I could have helped him to avoid that fate.

I said at the beginning of these pages that the University of Chicago

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was, when I came there, in the beginning of the fourth decade of this century, a wonderful place for an intellectually serious young person. Some say that it still is. Perhaps that is not for me to say, since I am now older than were any of the persons I have discussed when I was in close contact with them before the Second World War. The traditions of seriousness about important things and of the freedom to study them according to one's best lights have persisted. The soil from which the traditions embodied in Knight, Park, and Lasswell grew has become somewhat more stony in recent years as the social sciences have become more professional, more rigorous, more specialized, more preoccupied with contemporary questions, and more dependent on the interests and whims of the federal government and the large philanthropic foundations. Despite these constraints, those two traditions on which I was nurtured in Chicago are still there, still alive, and still flourishing. I owe a great deal to them.

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The Critic Outside

KARL SHAPIRO

WHEN I LOOK BACK on the corpus of criticism I have written, I am not sorry—although a lot of other people are. Real critics have not known what to do with me. Cleanth Brooks, in a preface to one of his works, once tried to find my critical category and, I believe, gave up. John Cage, in his collected lectures called *Silence,* puzzled over why I wrote a long critical essay in iambic pentameter, and came up with the rather plausible explanation that I was treating prose to a dose of rhythm. In the relatively rational march of criticism I have been out of step and out of line—a nuisance, perhaps, and an intellectual pest but never a party man or a camp follower. I have written a good deal in anger but never to shock for the shock's sake, the way my fellow Baltimorean and adolescent idol H. L. Mencken often did. Yet sometimes my books have been all but burned by the best people. Recently I ran across a letter of Edmund Wilson's published in a large collection of his correspondence. Writing to Alfred Kazin, he said, "I disliked Shapiro's book so much that I did not know what to do with it. I didn't want to send it to the dump and I didn't want to give it to a library, for fear it would mislead the young. Your review has persuaded me that the thing to do is to sell it to a second-hand bookstore. . . . " Wilson went on to say that I was teaching and reacting against the academic canon. The book was my main work of criticism, called *In Defense of Ignorance.* My essay on Eliot and possibly the one on Pound must have horrified Wilson. My comparison of Eliot with Uriah Heep, for instance, could not have endeared me to Bunny, as Wilson's friends called him. Still, I wish he had burned my book. It would have been a kind of compliment.

As far as I can tell, my book did mislead the young and the not so young. From time to time I have been startled by introductions to my public lectures in which it is stated that I turned the tide against T. S. Eliot, among other things. The latest such dubious compliment I heard was that I had split the entire academic community down the middle. I

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doubt if I did any of those epic deeds attributed to my book, but maybe I underestimate the power of criticism. I do know that I quite certainly promoted Henry Miller to academic status and that Miller considered me his best critic—a fact which gives me pause. My Miller essay was part of the same collection which Wilson wanted to dismiss from memory. To top this off, it is my only whole book which is translated into (of all things) Italian, making me wonder if I had a hand in the decline and fall of Italy.

It is probably difficult for people who do not publish books to understand the relationship of the author to his works. For example, when I say that I do not know my own criticism I am not likely to be believed. I have read almost none of it since it was published, and of the hundreds of book reviews I have written only a few appear in my published bibliographies. Only by chance do I find out when one of my books goes out of print. This inattentive attitude toward my criticism, however, doesn't apply to my poetry.

But given the opportunity to think back over my criticism, without actually reading it, I can understand certain reactions, ranging from outrage to the utmost panegyric. In regard to my criticism, the mark of attention I most prize is the use of my verse essay called *Essay on Rime* in the tripos exam at Cambridge. As I understand that mystery, a bachelor of arts, called bachelor of the stool or tripod, tries to befuddle an M.A. candidate in his oral by reciting indecent or humorous verses in contravention of the thesis. Whether my essay-poem was used as a sword or a shield in this examination I have never been able to learn.

It would appear that my criticism has had both a disruptive and a salutary effect from time to time, if any effect whatever, on that segment of the literary community which pays attention to the sayings of poets. My criticism is reactive, impure, nonobjective, and may not be criticism at all. It is dogmatic but lacking in dogma. I am not trying to analyze or judge myself—we have had enough of that to last a thousand years—but to explain what these writings were for. Eliot thought that the job, or part of the job, of the critic was to correct taste, and he set about correcting a lot of it. A writer like me, who finds himself outside a particular school of opinions such as Eliot delineated, will not necessarily delineate a new school but may oppose elements and examples of the old. In the absence of a philosophy of poetry, such as Classicism or whatever, he may fall back on something as subjective as Common Sense or Common Decency, terms that are indefinable and weak.

Anyone who has written as much criticism as I have is bound to like criticism generally. I like to read it and I like to write it, though I confess a preference for art criticism over poetry criticism. And one who writes

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much criticism of any kind is perhaps a contentious or antithetical personality. Dr. Johnson's criticism of Milton is astringent enough in itself, but T. S. Eliot on the same subject is devastating, both in his original attack on Milton and in his later apology, which only digs a deeper hole. On the other hand, there is no more contentious critic in literature than Milton himself, who is credited with the death of his intellectual rival Salmasius by the mighty iconoclastic pen of the epic poet. Nowadays I am tempted to rise to the defense of Milton against his newest enemies, the feminists, who are working over his patriarchal misogynistic characterizations of our first parents—or so they read the poet. I am not sure the legions of Miltonists need any help from me.

I came to criticism early, almost as early as I came to poetry. As with nearly all poets, poetry to me represented the interior life. Talk about poetry or criticism was a bridge to the outside—to which a poet made excursions, then usually beat a hasty retreat back to his books and papers. Yet the outside always beckoned.

My place was Baltimore, then a beautiful somewhat southern city, but never a pocket of culture. Baltimore had Poe's grave, where Whitman had stood when Poe's homely monument was unveiled. It had Sidney Lanier as poet and prosodist. And, live and loud, it had H. L. Mencken. I found out early that Mencken had no use for poetry. It was just about love and death, he said. But the presence of this journalist-editor-linguist-iconoclast electrified my American middle-class parents and contemporaries. Fearless, knowledgeable, famous, and vulgar, H. L. Mencken was worshipped by the middle class which he weekly consigned to oblivion. Something of Mencken must have rubbed off on every Baltimorean who ever had literary pretensions. It did on me.

Like most young people on the intellectual prowl in the thirties, I sought out the Communists. But unlike most young intellectuals I soon learned contempt for them and, what is worse, I mocked them. If Mencken had a low opinion of poetry, the Communists feared and hated it, as they hated all art and religion. I loved poetry, art, and religion, too.

At one point, because I was being wooed by the Young Communist League to join up, I was invited to give a talk to the John Reed Club, named for an American whose book about the Bolshevik revolution had earned him a berth in the tomb of Lenin himself. Reed, a rich young American, had helped found the American Communist Party. For my John Reed Club lecture I gave a defense of James Branch Cabell and erotic romanticism, and barely escaped a public beating. A gorilla-like Marxist came at me with his fists but was quieted by the chairman, a smooth young philosophy professor in a black suit from Johns Hopkins,

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who adduced me as an example of bourgeois decadence and the weakness of the John Reed program. My one reward for my association with the group was the discovery of W. H. Auden in an obscure British (?) magazine called *Dynamo*. Auden was then in his deepest flirtation with Marxism, although his publisher, T. S. Eliot, at Faber and Faber, thought —and in later years Auden himself admitted—that he was probably more like a fascist than a Communist. But in the thirties only experts could tell the difference. The discovery of Auden was to me like the discovery of poetry itself. I memorized his long poem "The Malverns," which was in the little magazine, and still think it one of his best, though Auden was to abolish it from his canon.

As friends my age were drummed out of the Party one by one for various thoughts and acts of dissension, and were punished by ostracism (the most the Communists could get away with in Baltimore), there was a drift toward Trotskyism, the brilliant and ineffectual fragment of what had been a dream of world revolution. For me the introduction to the Trotskyite *Partisan Review* was the important thing. Before long it began to publish my poems, one of which was my elegy on the death of the anarchist Emma Goldman. This poem was to be used as a frontispiece for her biography.

The confluence of poetry, criticism, and politics was very strong in my mind. Baltimore is a gate through which one can pass from North to South and vice versa. It is a deep-water port only a few miles from Washington, D.C. It is a natural spy center. In my John Reed Club adventure there were characters in the Chambers-Hiss case whom I knew. When Whittaker Chambers published his famous book *Witness*, I wrote him and identified two of these people. In Baltimore one could hear Sir John Strachey, the elegant British Communist, lecture on the coming struggle for power, or in a black neighborhood a fiery Garveyite on the back-to-Africa movement. One went to ideological splinter groups such as V. F. Calverton's. A Nazi battleship docked in Baltimore, its captain and officers honored and entertained by our mayor and the blue bloods of the city, while a demonstration of ten thousand steel and other workers protested. It was a very political time and a very political place, exhilarating and disturbing to an aspiring poet and a Jew.

Upon acceptance of my first group of poems by a major magazine, I was promptly admitted to the status of critic. The editors of *Poetry* asked me to review two books by World War I poets who were still publishing. It would never have crossed my mind to refuse. I believed it was my duty to accept the invitation, or perhaps bait, because from that moment on I was definitely hooked on criticism.

World War II had already begun in Europe; I was drafted nine

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months before Pearl Harbor. Only weeks after that event I was down under, on the other side of the world. I had my poems with me and my copy of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the anti-Bible of the poets of my generation. On the troopship I translated two of the sonnets, which still appear in anthologies. But criticism persisted. Before leaving America I had my first big group of poems included in an anthology of five young poets published by New Directions, then the only avant-garde publisher in this country. Each poet was asked to write a brief statement on poetics. I prepared a squib in which I defended my locale as the proper subject of my poetry. I thought of myself as the poet and critic of my middle-class street, of the middle class itself. Twenty years later I expanded this identification to the bourgeois poet. In my poetics note I assailed the exploitation of the word "America" as a trope. At the time there were many poems called America this and America that, which made me uneasy. I believed in the part and took the whole for granted.

We had advanced to New Guinea when reviews of my first volume of poems reached me. Among them was a prophecy that I might become the touchstone of my generation. What a heady and unexpected reward for a book of verse! I had never thought of myself as part of a generation and I wasn't even sure what a touchstone was. Touchstone: jasper used to test the fineness of silver and gold. That is, others were to be tested against me. For a soldier sitting on a beach in New Guinea, this was like being made a general in the field. It was the poet-critic Louise Bogan who gave me this accolade.

Simultaneously Allen Tate wrote a review which affected my sensibility, if I may use the threadbare term, permanently. After praising my work, he spoke of its quality of honesty. He spoke of "that final honesty which is rare, unpleasant, and indispensable in a poet of our time." He mentioned his own failure to achieve this quality and indicated that I was the first poet to do so since T. S. Eliot. He also had a few admonitions about the possible *excesses* of honesty and my tendency to elaborate what he called my "Baudelairean disgust."

The extent to which poets are influenced by their critics has not been fully examined, I believe. Scholars and theorists usually think of influence in terms of other, usually older, artists. One critic even terms it an adversary relationship. But to the growing poet, whether he rejects the criticism or not, the critic represents his readers, or a part of his constituency. A critic or reviewer has a direct line to the poet which no nebulous influence can have. A poet may forget that he was nourished in the atmosphere of Shakespeare or budded in the climate of Auden, but he can never forget who said what about his art, his ideas, and the minutiae of his technique. What critics say about one's creative work is crucial to the

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poet's development—at least up to a certain point in one's career at which confidence is virtually unassailable. This is also a danger point for the poet; he may cut himself off from his critics entirely. I suspect that many successful poets and artists do not read their critics at all and may even avoid them studiously.

My own first serious work of criticism was a poem: the verse essay which became my Cantabrigian contribution, named *Essay on Rime*. Once during the war, when my group was informed that we would be sent to a staging or reorganization area for ninety days, I blocked out a verse essay in which I planned to write twenty or thirty lines a day, and which turned out in fact to be about two thousand lines long. It was to be my only plotted work, with chapter and subchapter heads, numbered lines, and marginal glosses. That is, it would look like a classic. To my amazement, it was published not only in journals but as a book, in New York and in London.

The book was acclaimed by F. O. Matthiessen, a famous American literature professor, who saw it as "the most remarkable contribution to American art to come out of the war." And because the voice in my essay-poem spoke ex cathedra, the book was generously attacked by my contemporaries. The essay was a "chapter of cultural and moral history," Matthiessen said, and with a humanist affirmation.

Matthiessen had simultaneously acclaimed a book of my poems which had won the Pulitzer Prize while I was still in the army (an unforgivable affront to poets who weren't). In 1950 Matthiessen committed suicide in a horrible and public manner. I wrote an elegy which I still retain among my favored poems. Everyone agreed that among the main causes of his ultimate depression was his feeling of betrayal by Communism. Matthiessen had visited central Europe and Czechoslovakia after the war and, as one can see from his book about the visit, was innocent enough politically to believe that the Communists would respect the lives and liberties of non-Communists. His recognition of the reality was a blow to his idealism and intellectual pride. It was as if, having won the war, we had already lost to Russia. It has taken a whole generation for us to catch up with this truth, which Matthiessen saw and could not bear.

From time to time in our cultural climate, writers and poets are encouraged, if not coerced, to make statements of belief, not only about their art but about politics, religion, or anything else. I find that almost all my essays answer questions about such basic ideas. Most of my pieces have to do with the American writer qua American and also, more specifically, the American-Jewish writer. The famous Bollingen episode of 1948, in which the Bollingen Prize was awarded to Ezra Pound, set me on a critical quest which I am still pursuing. Most people groan at the

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mention of the thing, thinking or hoping that the dead horse has been flogged enough. Whereas, after a generation, I still consider it the greatest literary scandal in American literature and one which the Pound people have succeeded in covering up.

Rather than attempt a reconstruction of the event, let me quote a paragraph from the official Library of Congress Press Release (No. 542, February 20, 1949) and my part in it.

> The Bollingen Prize in Poetry, established a year ago, was made possible by a gift of money from the Bollingen Foundation, and is to be awarded annually on the basis of a recommendation by a jury of selection consisting of the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress. This is an honorary and advisory group appointed by the Librarian of Congress and consists of the following well-known writers: Conrad Aiken, W. H. Auden, Louise Bogan, Katherine Garrison Chapin, T. S. Eliot, Paul Green, Robert Lowell, Katherine Anne Porter, Karl Shapiro, Allen Tate, Willard Thorp and Robert Penn Warren, as well as Leonie Adams, the Library's Consultant in Poetry in English for the present year. . . .

Almost all these people were present in the flesh at the one meeting we held. There was no discussion about a recipient of the award, although it was the year of the publication of one of the books of William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* as well as Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*. The donation of the prize to Pound was predetermined, in my opinion, and whatever discussion there was must have taken place elsewhere. And although members of this honorary body were supposed to be American citizens—a question still being debated to this day—T. S. Eliot was imported from England to vote on the prize. Eliot had just won the Nobel Prize and was at the height of his fame and his powers. His mere presence in the room was awesome and decisive. My no vote was the only one, except for that of the dramatist Paul Green, who pleaded ignorance of the poem.

This is not the place to discuss the merits or demerits of *The Pisan Cantos*, but it is relevant to mention two facts. One is that Pound was in prison nearby, under indictment for high treason against the government of the United States for his support of Mussolini's Italy. To quote *Time* magazine, which I have never done before: "War gave Pound the international voice his poetry had failed to give him. On the Rome radio, he used it to heap contumely on the Jews, to lecture and vilify his native land. After the U.S. entered the War, he kept it up. On July 26, 1943, he became one of the few U.S. citizens ever to be indicted for treason." (*Time*, December 10, 1945.) My second fact is implicit in the quotation. Pound's anti-Semitism reached its climax of bigotry and blood lust in the very *Cantos* which our Library of Congress jury was honoring.

There is an inelegant saying among Jews: "The moment a person for-

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gets he is a Jew, some Gentile reminds him." I was being reminded with a vengeance. I felt also that my recent induction into the literary establishment could not last long, though I was kept on the Bollingen jury for a couple of years after the Pound affair. (Twenty years later I was to receive the prize myself, along with John Berryman.) But my negative role in the matter knocked me widdershins. I was in an especially ticklish position. For instance, the *Saturday Review of Literature* sent a man to ask me to write an exposé of "the Fascist plot on Capitol Hill." This person announced himself as a Communist, for some reason. I refused and the magazine employed Robert Hillyer, a Harvard poet and professor, to write a generalized attack against modern poetry, which backfired. I took on Hillyer myself and found that I was fighting on two fronts.

Later I would look at my poems from the angle of vision of an American Jew and publish a collection called *Poems of a Jew*, a title which startled or puzzled many readers. In the introduction I stated that the Jewish question was not my concern, nor was Judaism, nor was Israel, nor was religion itself. What did matter was the Jewish consciousness, which I could not escape, even if I tried. Besides, there was no point trying to escape; there would always be someone to remind me. Like every other American Jewish writer I was one more of Franz Kafka's characters, as he himself was the prototype.

I sent a copy of my *Poems of a Jew* to T. S. Eliot and did not receive a reply. I did it in good faith, but perhaps it was construed as an act of rudeness. Eliot suffered from the accusation of anti-Semitism all his life, but if he ever espoused that doctrine in the common provincial or a serious political way, he had long since renounced it. There is in the long run a high dignity about Eliot's thought which commands everyone's respect. Yet when Auden—I think in casual chatter after the Bollingen meeting—tossed off a remark to the effect that everyone is anti-Semitic sometimes, he spoke a truth which would be better left unspoken.

About the time I sent my book to Eliot I was publishing the black poet Melvin B. Tolson. My association and friendship with Tolson is the second most important event in my life as a critic, for here I came into contact with the new black cultural world, which was to reject me as it rejected Allen Tate.

Tolson's great poem *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia,* which was commissioned by that nation to celebrate its centennial, was published in 1953 with an introduction by Allen Tate. As far as I can tell, the poem is still only a succès d'estime even though, along with Tate and myself, Tolson's poetry was hailed by William Carlos Williams—who quotes a piece of it in *Paterson*—Theodore Roethke, Robert Frost, John Ciardi, and others. But Tate played a role in the final form of the *Libretto* which

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is not dissimilar to the role Pound played in the formation of *The Waste Land*.

Tolson had sent an early version of the poem to Tate, with the request that he write a preface for it. After reading the manuscript, Tate returned it, saying that he was not interested in the propaganda of a Negro poet. Instead of taking offense, Tolson set about to correct this weakness, which he himself had criticized in the work of other black poets. A year later he submitted a new version to Tate, who wrote a remarkable preface. He praised the first-rate intelligence at work in the poem and observed, "For the first time, it seems to me, a Negro poet has assimilated completely the full poetic language of his time, and, by implication, the language of the Anglo-American poetic tradition." I was to question this statement when I wrote my introduction to Tolson's next book, *Harlem Gallery*. That was in 1965, before the use of the term "black" superseded "Negro," which is now as obsolete as "Israelite." When I said that Tolson wrote in Negro I was expressing an insight which was to be borne out before long by the adoption of "black." But Negroes were puzzled and even hurt by what I said.

Tolson did not write in demotic, or what is nowadays called black, English, in the way Cavafy wrote in demotic Greek. In the *Libretto* Tolson used—in conjunction with elaborate metrical and rhyme structures—abstruse encyclopedia references mixed with various tonalities of white and black language and a vocabulary from French, Latin, German, Hebrew, Swahili, Arabic, Spanish, and Sanskrit. If this was in some kind of Anglo-American tradition, as Tate wanted it to be, then it would be modeled on a poem like *The Waste Land* or the *Cantos*. Tolson in fact, like most poets of his generation, was profoundly influenced by *The Waste Land*, and his *Libretto* is one of the few examples of its direct stylistic influence that we have. Such an assessment was correct from the point of view of a critic and poet like Tate, who could incorporate the work into the Great Tradition. From an outsider's point of view, such as mine, I could see the poem not only *in se* but as a massive and deliberate irony on the tradition. The grace and insouciance of the diction, in its mockery of the high poetic style, is masterful and unlike any other black poetry I have seen, but is tightened to such a powerful torque that one thinks of the more successfully excruciating passages of Hopkins or Donne. *Harlem Gallery* is as good as, or even better than, the *Libretto*. Few if any read these works, and one doubts if they are even available.

In the mid-sixties I gave a lecture at a black college in Savannah, Georgia, which I called "The Decolonization of American Literature." In it I described the American process of cultural assimilation and wondered if the Negro could or would participate in the process. I ended by

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saying: "This essay stops at the threshold of the Black Revolution or the Black Recoil or whatever it is called. I prefer to think of it as a Black Apartheid, a deliberate withdrawal into racism for whatever gains it can produce. . . ." That apartheid became worse than I had projected, and is now virtually complete. Once again we have a separate nation of blacks in this country, this time on their own terms. Recently I introduced a black poet at a reading on our campus. The poet began by announcing that she was no longer an American but an African, and demonstrated the fact by refusing to drink water from a Dixie cup which had an American flag printed on it. The Black Recoil is also, in its new Mohammedan phase, anti-Christianity and even anti-Semitic. I doubt if even Kafka could field that one.

In one of my What-Is-American-Poetry-If-Any essays I danced around the question this way:

> What would an American poetry be like, should we have one? Certainly it would not be recognizable as such. It would be nonsensical, hilarious, and obscene like us. Absurd like us. It would be marked, as we are, by cultural forgetfulness and lack of principle. It would be void of values and ideals, sensual, joyous, bitter, curious, gossipy, knowledgeable to the last minute detail, ungrammatical, endlessly celebrating the facts, objects, neuroses, murders, love affairs, and vulgarities of America. Certainly it would develop favorite forms, but these would be soluble in prose. It would be comical and slack and full of junk; impure, generous, bookish and cheap. It would be mystical, savage, drab and as hateful as Joyce Kilmer's "Trees." And so on.

This was written in the middle sixties and I must say to my sorrow that it is an almost perfect description of what we now call contemporary poetry, with its thousands of magazines and millions in money showered on the art by the bureaus of Washington. I call it mass poetry or welfare poetry, and I oppose it as best I can.

Three decades ago when I was made editor of *Poetry* magazine, I wrote T. S. Eliot for advice and encouragement. He replied generously and thoughtfully with some remarks that are still used in advertising the magazine. At the end of his letter he made the sly suggestion that he sometimes wished the motto on the magazine would be removed. The motto was by Walt Whitman: "To have great poets there must be great audiences too." I removed it.

I think the idea of a great poetry audience is a pipe dream. Whitman certainly didn't have such an audience, nor does he now. On the other hand, the absence of a great audience doesn't imply an esoteric cenacle, such as Mallarmé created and Eliot proposed. One of the ironies of modern poetry is that Eliot became so popular; one has only to think of the truly great audience summoned by Eliot in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As

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for this new phenomenon of mass poetry and a whole new social class of people called poets, I think it must be one of those fads Americans start from time to time as a device for expressing something else. I don't see how it can be taken seriously and I am convinced that it will pass away in another decade, as did goldfish-swallowing.

My collection of essays called *In Defense of Ignorance*—the book that bothered Edmund Wilson—was so named because of a slur directed against D. H. Lawrence about his "philosophical ignorance." My book was a defense of poets like Whitman, Lawrence, Williams, Dylan Thomas, and the quasi poet Henry Miller, as against the self-styled "classicists" of our time. As an epigraph I used Rimbaud's adolescent squib that everything we are taught is false. The time of the book coincided with a period of mischief in my life in which I wrote a serious plea for Tolstoyan anarchism, dabbled in humanist existentialism, introduced my students to the cabala, astrology, and Zen, and preached the works of Céline and de Sade. I was also in the process of getting a divorce.

When the Beat movement got organized and took its circus on the road I arranged for the group to raid our university at Lincoln, Nebraska. I satirized their antics and their "philosophy" in a novel called *Edsel*, a book which some of the high-toned moral elements of the community tried but failed to suppress, although their accusation that the novel was obscene is true. All in all, what I termed the Subjective Revolution, which is only now beginning to abate, saddened and horrified me. It is no accident that this revolution had its epicenter in California, a state which attracts earthquake-prone people in large numbers.

I confess that a good deal of my activity as poet-on-campus resembled that of a Trojan horse, but I sometimes think that was why I was hired. I have written much about the writer in the academy but nothing very decisive. I find in my latter years of teaching that I did not know much about the academy because I was shielded from it. Only since I began teaching at the University of California, where writers are not given preferential treatment, have I discovered what it means to be a professor. My respect for the academy has increased proportionately.

Originally the poet or writer came to the academy as a live specimen, much as the biological sciences import their primates. I think the poet was invited in order to be studied. (I have frequently been aware that my colleagues regard me with a particular kind of attention.) The poet is wanted also because he is, or is supposed to be, an exemplar of the creative sensibility, and not only in language. This does not mean that his opinions and ideas are necessarily valued but only that they are, relative to normal intellectual behavior, extradimensional, or at least unexpected. But finally the poet is admitted to the world of scholarship and

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research because it is hoped that he can impart his craft to others. Now, whether poets and writers can teach well, or as well as professional teachers, I do not know. I have never won any prizes for teaching. And whether what they teach can be taught better by noncreative writers I am not sure. Still, it would not be a total loss if all that the poet imparted was a love for, say, Walter Savage Landor. But I am afraid that what the poet really imparts is himself. I don't think he has much to teach which the youths cannot teach themselves or be taught by a good strong lover of literature and scholarship. The poet, on the other hand, is rewarded by the discovery of a rich and mysterious world, the academy itself. And I think he is happy there. Why shouldn't he be?

The poet is also implanted as a critical seismograph. He shivers when literature shifts. "What do you think of John Ashbery?" he is asked. People never ask what he thinks of "The Pearl" poet, and would be surprised that he had ever heard of him.

The Creative Writing experiment is now a generation old. It has been thoroughly tested and explored in every conceivable way and has proved, in my opinion, a colossal failure. Common sense dictates that it should be abandoned. But dismantling an apparatus of such magnitude and tenaciousness is difficult and endangers the edifice to which it is attached. I hope to encourage a beginning to this gingerly operation.

It began with the teaching of the craft, a legitimate area of pedagogy at any level of education. It ended with the teaching of what is called a Life Style. At this stage Creative Writing might be described as a sociopolitical phenomenon rather than a humanist pursuit. One can maintain that, despite the seeming variety of programs throughout the United States, they share the same social, political, and aesthetic tenets. Their platform has never been enunciated, of course, or posted on the bulletin board, but everyone understands that it is social-revolutionary, egalitarian, "ecological," pacifist, and anti-nationalist. It is a platform which derives from a mélange of attitudes and schools, from the declarations of Baudelaire and the surrealists on the one hand to the extremism of Pound on the other. The debasement of the Pound-Williams prosody by these later practitioners would not be countenanced by either of those elders in my opinion. Ask any creative writing student about the form or rhythm of his poem and you will receive a blank stare. Or he will give you a little talk about breathing and such mysteries.

In his 1967 biography of Pound, Michael Reck says:

> Pound speaks irritably of the fact that Karl Shapiro has recently attacked him as Fascist and anti-Semite. These charges are unjust, he feels. "Someone is needed to defend grandpa," he says. A couple of years later Allen Ginsberg went to defend him, but by that time Pound had recanted. "You have shown us the way,"

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Ginsberg said—"And your economics are *right*. . . . And as humours—using the word in the ancient sense, as a state of mind—the irritations against Taoists, Buddhists, and Jews fit into their place as a part of *The Cantos*, despite your intentions, as the theatre, the record of flux consciousness."

To this strange and ingenious compliment Pound replied by repudiating his epic and confessing the stupidity of his anti-Semitism. It was a sad farewell from the old poet. Nevertheless the attempt to incorporate the Pound canon, ideology and all, into the postmodern poetic was successful. "Flux consciousness" is as good a way as any to describe the mindless quality of most of the products of Creative Writing.

I continued my defense of poetry against yahooism into the seventies, in prose and verse. I published a book of essays called *To Abolish Children*, using "children" as a metaphor for "adolescents." I tried satire, and *Time* magazine reminded me that I was no Jonathan Swift. I published anti-radical verses which, one of my liberal colleagues told me recently, he actually burned.

Forty years of marching through criticism prompt me to pause and look around. How does the poetry field look to me now? I will enumerate.

1. There is still no poetry audience, only a greater population of persons who claim the title of poet. In my experience, nobody in this country reads poetry except poets, writers, and teachers of poetry. There is, however, a poetry inflation which has been brought about by the political pump priming of culture bureaus and Creative Writing lobbies. I find little of value in their product.

2. Poetry anthologies which call themselves postmodern, new, or contemporary continue to try to formulate a canon but have to fall back on the poets of the forties and fifties to give substance to their lists. The main innovation in the anthologies and critical books has been to exile T. S. Eliot and his theories and, paradoxically, to elevate Pound and even his dreary and ungifted disciples, such as Charles Olson and Louis Zukofsky, as exemplars.

3. The postmoderns propound apologies for the personal, the narcissistic, and the solipsistic, as well as for the tribal, antifamilial, and antinational ethos, drawn from both primitive and esoteric lore—really the drop-out strategies of the fifties and sixties. At the same time, in the American vein, these poets compete for poetry jobs in the academy and for money from anywhere and everywhere. They themselves refer to these activities ironically and guiltily as Po-Biz, an interesting pun.

4. Because of the long and concerted campaign against memory in pedagogy and Creative Writing, knowledge of poetic literature has been

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radically diminished. The loss of skills in the language arts, including one's own, contributes to the widespread cultural amnesia. Poets with large vocabularies, grammatical genius, extensive prosody, and high intelligence, like Auden, are avoided. In place of such modern titans the poets read garish translations of South American Marxists who supply them with large doses of angst, warmed-over surrealism, anti-American hatred, and latino blood, sweat, and tears. They do translations of such poets without, in most cases, bothering to learn the languages.

5. Prosody of every category, including free verse, has been eliminated. There are no rhythmic controls, organic or ornamental, of any sort. Neither can the much-vaunted prose criterion be located.

6. This second generation of Creative Writing teachers and practitioners has bad marks against it. Untrained and frequently ungifted poets are admitted to the ranks, given authority, and left to their own devices. The academy is left to answer for this frivolousness.

7. Finally, and on a palmier note, we have the solid and authentic achievement of modern poetry, which persists into the eighth decade of our century. One can rest assured that out of the furnace of our brilliant and terrifying age, the incredible hunks and fragments of this poetry will survive as our achievement and our monument.

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Mannequins

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

This indecent procession of the undead
invades the Avenue windows, dressed to kill,
sporting tomorrow's clothes and yesterday's faces.

One struts in a velvet shaft of midnight blue,
slashed down the back in a diamond heat of lust,
gold crown at the wrist and throat, a garnet ring.
Here Lucie Anne side-slits a terry dress
trimmed in Venetian lace
and petal edging on the camisole. There a lady
most unladylike, lounges
in silk of liquidly drapable muscadine,
grinning the wine-red of wickedness. Another
borrows the schoolgirl's kiss, the cupie bow,
eyes round and empty as pots, and the apple cheek.
For we also yearn to join the innocent in their clothes:
Jill in her jumper, Johnnie in his jeans,
sheep in their fleece, the pig in his narrow poke.

But I prefer them naked, the posturing frauds,
free from any trace of shame, and without nipples
or the fur that friction-proofs our parts for love.
I like them headless, oh Marie Antoinette,
what beauty knocked in the executioner's bucket!
I like them wigless, as a rack of bullets.
I like when a leg is kicked out of its socket
or an arm flings back in some preposterous gesture
as if to say

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"So happy to have missed the agony of meeting you,"
or
"We who are early salute you from the backs of our heads."
I love when the feet swivel for a fast retreat,
and the head jerks in wonder defying the neck.

But when they are assembled and decked out
they turn vicious, whispering through the glass:
"How have you achieved your shabbiness?
Where is your glamour, the youth you were born with?
Where, if you have one eye, is the other,
and if you have three limbs, where is the fourth?
Where is your hair, marcelled or carefully windblown,
your eyebrows, the artfully painted lips?
Put your face to the glass, you wretched snail,
kiss me, you desecration of a man."

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John Dewey in Peace and War

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS

DOES PRAGMATISM WORK? To ask the question is to risk going against the American grain. During the first half of the twentieth century the philosophy of pragmatism seemed to be America's national creed. Even today, long after its demise, many scholars remain convinced that the rise of pragmatism not only liberated progressive thought from the deductive chains of nineteenth-century conservative ideology, but even resolved the crisis of authority that confronted an American mind coming to terms with twentieth-century modernity. Joining hands with natural science, pragmatism offered empirical methodology as the answer to epistemological doubt. As "process" replaced "truth," the intellect no longer had to ask unanswerable questions about the perennial riddles and ironies of history and philosophy. Man thinking became man doing, and the challenge was not so much to contemplate life as to "experience" it. For experience would demonstrate that the problem of authority could be democratized through education and collective inquiry. Indeed experience demonstrated that a problem without a solution was simply not a problem.

American scholars could be confident that pragmatism resolved the problems of life because intellectual historians concentrated on its background and development, while philosophers evaluated its theoretical implications in view of the technical issues in philosophy itself. Few historians or philosophers—even such astute critics as Arthur O. Lovejoy, Bertrand Russell, and George Santayana—studied pragmatic ideas in light of their consequences in human behavior. It seems strangely ironic that an intellectual historian or a philosopher would accept the theoretical claims of pragmatism without examining its actual operations in the daily world of experience. Such behavior presupposes the very formalism that pragmatism sought to overcome—the fallacy of accepting at face value what a thinker says rather than what he does, and of treating the propositions of philosophy as tantamount to their validity. The irony lies in the awkward fact that pragmatism may be refuted not so much by logic as by its own criterion of verification: the experience of history may

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demonstrate that it fails to work in helping us understand history itself. Can pragmatism help resolve the crisis of authority in history by providing authoritative knowledge about history? Let us examine how John Dewey, the leading exponent of pragmatism in the twentieth century, responded to historical events and interpreted the meaning and direction of history itself. We begin with the event that plunged civilization into "the abyss of blood and darkness," to use Henry James's description of the Great War of 1914.

The outbreak of World War I confronted John Dewey's pragmatism with one of its greatest challenges. He had always held up rational intelligence and the scientific method as the means by which disputes could be settled. To the bitter surprise of many intellectuals, however, Dewey came out in support of America's entry into the war, and he did so with a well-developed rationale that justified his new position. The war, Dewey held in the *New Republic* in 1917, opened up the possibility of employing collective knowledge on an international scale, bringing to foreign as well as domestic affairs the service of the scientific expert in the cause of peace and justice. The war was not only an instrument of integration and socialization; it also compelled the intellectual to reconsider the "intelligent use of force" in international affairs. The war had dramatized the impotence and "moral innocency" of the pacificists, who believed that war could be opposed simply by the exercise of conscience.

> The tendency to oppose war by bringing it under the commandment against murder, the belief that by not doing something, by keeping out of a declaration of war, our responsibilities could be met, a somewhat mushy belief in the existence of disembodied moral forces which require only an atmosphere of feelings to operate so as to bring about what is right, the denial of the efficacy of force, no matter how controlled, to modify disposition; in short the inveterate habit of separating ends from means and then identifying morals with ends thus emasculated, such things as these are the source of much of the perplexity of conscience which idealistic youth has suffered. The evangelical Protestant tradition has fostered the tendency to locate morals in personal feeling instead of in the control of situations, and our legal tradition has bred the habit of attaching feelings to fixed rules and injunctions instead of to social conditions and consequences of action as these are revealed to the scrutiny of intelligence.

Convinced that America's entry into the war could not be resisted, Dewey argued that history could only be brought under control if the intellectual focused on the rush of events and thereby came to understand the inevitability of America's involvement.

> If at a critical juncture the moving force of events is always too much for conscience, the remedy is not to deplore the wickedness of those who manipulate events. Such a conscience is largely self-conceit. The remedy is to connect con-

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science with the forces that are moving in another direction. Then will conscience itself have compulsive power instead of being forever the martyred and the coerced.

Ultimately Dewey justified America's entry by trying to show the compatibility of pragmatism and war, an effort that led him to distinguish force from violence.

> Common sense still clings to a via media between the Tolstoian, to whom all force is violence and all violence evil, and that glorification of force which is so easy when war arouses turbulent emotion, and so persistent (in disguised forms) whenever competition rules industry. I should be glad to make the voice of common sense more articulate. As an initial aid, I would call to mind the fact that force figures in different roles. Sometimes it is energy; sometimes it is coercion or constraint; sometimes it is violence. Energy is power used with a eulogistic meaning; it is power doing work, harnessed to accomplishment of ends. But it is force nonetheless, brute force if you please, and rationalized only by its results. Exactly the same force running wild is called violence. The objection to violence is not that it involves force, but that it is a waste of force; that it uses force idly or destructively. And what is called law may always, I suggest, be looked at as describing a method for employing force economically, efficiently, so as to get results with the least waste.

Dewey assured himself, and some of the *New Republic* liberals, that "force is the only thing in the world which effects anything," and thus those who would substitute law or morality or some other source of authority in order to resolve conflicts were being unrealistic and, worse, ineffectual. "Squeamishness about force is the mark not of idealistic but of moonstruck morals." Dewey may have been correct to argue that the authority of the state could require the exercise of physical strength if necessary, just as other writers (Walter Lippmann, for example) would argue that the United States must enter the war to protect its national interests and to assure itself of participating effectively in the peace negotiations. But Dewey's view of the war as a potential instrument of social reconstruction seemed to fly in the face of his view of the war as historically inevitable. As Randolph Bourne replied to Dewey, "If the war is too strong for you to prevent, how is it going to be weak enough for you to control and mold to your liberal purposes?" Bourne's critique deserves our attention. In "Twilight of the Idols," which appeared in *The Seven Arts* in 1917, Bourne became the first writer, as far as I know, to discern in pragmatic philosophy a tendency to equate authority with power and to look to force as a solution to problems. In his essay "The State," unfinished at the time of his death in 1919, Bourne made a crucial distinction between the normal mechanisms of government during peace and the dangerous mystification of the state during war.

Bourne believed that the central deficiency of pragmatism could be

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traced to its lack of a "poetic vision," a sense of the true and right as opposed to the efficient and expedient. Lacking such a sensibility, pragmatism could easily confuse the illegitimate power of the state with the constituted authority of government. "War is the health of the state," declared Bourne in what would become an epigrammatic lament for a subsequent war-weary generation. In war, power gravitates away from legitimate institutions and ascends to an emotional abstraction that can enforce its will. In this situation, Bourne argued, the individual reaches his "apotheosis" not in democratic participation but in a total surrender of his being to the state, and the state becomes indistinguishable from the regular machinery of government and takes on the majesty of rightful authority.

In Dewey's wartime writings one finds America's leading liberal philosopher using history to justify nothing less than authority itself. His defense of the government's military efforts against Germany, and of conscription, legitimated the power of the state and turned it into rightful authority worthy of intellectual and moral support. Yet Dewey's reasoning points up the difficulties in the pragmatic attempt to tie political authority to the philosophical authority of scientific methodology, to the rule of efficiency and the criterion of consequences, "something which concerns results rather than aspirations." For Dewey's advice that the intellectual must "connect conscience with the forces that are moving in another direction"; his observation, made in response to the patriotic hysteria and suppression of civil liberties in 1917, that "the appeal is no longer to reason; it is to the event"; and, not least, his rather desperate effort to distinguish "force" from "violence"—all illuminate with equal poignancy the problems inherent in the pragmatic approach to history. As a pragmatist more concerned with the outcome than with the origins of the war, with future consequences rather than historical causes, Dewey could refer vaguely to "forces" without specifying their political or economic nature and without analyzing the causal factors behind them. How, then, could he possibly conclude that the war could not be resisted? How could he grasp what was happening when he had no basis for knowing what had happened? One thinks of the old saying that the only thing which is irresistible is that which is not resisted.

The dilemma that Dewey courageously faced actually confronted the most sensitive minds of the entire World War I generation, in Europe as well as America: the "horror" of unexplained events. To overcome this sense of intellectual helplessness, Dewey advised the troubled liberal to "connect conscience" with the "forces" that were violating it. But Dewey himself made no effort to ascertain some causal relation in order to connect the war with the "forces" that brought it about, so as to know what it is one is fighting for—and against. He had good epistemological

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reasons for avoiding such an exercise, as we shall see. Yet this strategy meant that Dewey could only think about history from the outside, describing vaguely its nature, movement, and direction; he could not address himself to problems within history itself—the connections, causes, and explanations of events. In Dewey's mode of thinking, the study of history becomes not so much a precise method of inquiry as a vague philosophy of process, not so much a means of knowing what was as a way of believing in what will be. If the purpose of authority is to get itself obeyed, Dewey wanted to get intellectuals to obey the processes of history, "the moving forces of events." In doing so, Dewey was assuming that one can control history by becoming its agent, an assumption that would render individual judgment indistinguishable from the forces that are shaping it by counseling subjective obedience to objective events. Legitimate authority would thus become external to its subjects, while political consciousness, the ability to reflect on power, would be lost to the forces of history. And since the significance of those forces is itself bound up with the future, the wisdom of Dewey's advice must wait upon events.

It is not wisdom but courage that Dewey offers in the name of useful knowledge. For whereas classical philosophers had justified the use of force by appealing to the past, as Hannah Arendt reminded us, Dewey singularly appealed to the future, to "the event which is still to be." He chose, ironically, to identify with power and to advocate what almost amounted to submission to historical destiny—even though, as a pragmatic philosopher, he had no way of perceiving the movement or meaning of history, since the future cannot be known until it is experienced. In Dewey the problem of history, the task of interpreting events, is not so much examined as projected; and the problem of authority, the obligation to legitimate the exercise of power, is not so much explained as postponed.

A fundamental paradox appears to lie at the heart of Dewey's attitude toward history. Although he looked to human experience as the test of truth, historical experience could never be the source of authority. Indeed Dewey's philosophy denied the historian the ability to make reliable judgments about the past. With pragmatism, the professor of history would seem to be almost obsolete, an antiquarian who, as Tolstoy put it, is like a deaf man answering questions nobody has asked him.

Dewey had good philosophical reasons for making the historian aware of the crisis of knowledge in his discipline. No longer could the scholar sustain the claims of both moralism and historicism—the claim that, on the one hand, the study of history could yield ethical truths and, on the other, that it could recapture the past as it actually had been. The

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idea that the purpose of history is to discover the great moral lessons of the past that we should know in order to obey could hardly be endorsed by Dewey, who saw historical reality as an indeterminate series of unique events from which no clear lessons could be drawn. He also rejected the historicist goal on the ground that historical investigation cannot discover actual reality since the object of inquiry is transformed in the act of reconstituting it. Insofar as what happened in the past cannot be known independent of our present thinking about it, the distinction between history and the historian all but disappeared in Dewey's philosophy.

The collapse of that distinction did not prevent Dewey from valuing the study of history. For one thing, history could demonstrate that philosophical issues arise from a specific historical context which renders dubious the claims of timeless truths. It could also show that the goal of knowledge is not truth but "meaning," the relationship between consciousness and its environment, and that the interaction of mind and nature had its highest expression in scientific methodology. The cultural authority of science in modern civilization could be applied to history, an argument Dewey spelled out in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. "History," wrote Dewey in typical prose, "is an instance of judgment as a resolution through inquiry of a problematic situation." The pragmatic historian, concerning himself not with the actual, perished past but with the effects of the past as it relates to problems in the present, can use his craft as an instrument of social control. Even though history itself may never become a science, because of the contingent nature of social reality and the vanished nature of the past, a scientific temperament could, Dewey wrote in *Experience and Nature*, help the historian begin to control events by demonstrating which qualities of human existence are "pervasive, common, stable."

Dewey's theory of historical inquiry once enjoyed widespread influence. It not only rendered philosophical justification to the "new history" of James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard; it also seemed to offer a rationale for regarding history in the secondary schools as a "problem-solving tool" to be used by teachers of "current affairs"—often the gym coach whose idea of primary research was the morning paper. And it offered a message of hope for liberals in the twenties and even for Marxists in the thirties. As Sidney Hook observed in 1933, both Dewey and Marx, having absorbed the praxis orientation of Hegel's ontology, came forth with the same imperative: the historian's task is not to interpret the world but to change it, as Hook wrote in *Karl Marx: Towards a Revolutionary Interpretation*. The question remains, however, whether that which cannot be accurately interpreted because of epistemological impediments can be basically changed. If the crisis of objective knowl-

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edge prevents us from ascertaining the exact origins of a problem, can we still claim to offer a solution to it? Dewey may have given us hope, but did he really enable us to deal with history?

Let us consider three of the most pressing issues of historical study itself: causation, judgment, and representation. Pragmatic history cannot deal with causation because the traditional genetic method used by historians, where it was assumed that a close analysis of a historical development contributes to our understanding of its nature, not only tells us little about the order of connection between events but as a method cannot be subjected to empirical confirmation. Nor can pragmatism engage itself with moral judgments that involve the vagaries of human intentionality and may also require standards of judgment external to the situation judged. And the pragmatist cannot deal with representations of the past that have no means of scientific verification in the present. Insofar as genuine historical inquiry does not arise from idle curiosity but from our needs and desires, our knowledge of history will be conditioned by the questions we bring to it; hence all we can know about the past is not its objective reality but what has been modified in the act of knowing it in response to present needs.

Given these reservations about history's capacity to yield truth, one can understand why Dewey could not, in his own words, "see any grounds for claiming that it should play any large role in the curriculum of elementary education." In *Moral Principles in Education*, Dewey called for the authority of the historian to be supplanted by that of the sociologist. "History is vital or dead to the child according as it is, or is not, presented from the sociological standpoint. When treated simply as a record of what has passed and gone, it must be mechanical, because the past, as past, is remote. Simply as the past there is no motive for attending to it." Unwilling to permit students "to become deeply immersed in what is forever gone by," Dewey advised teachers that "the past is the past, and the dead may be safely left to bury the dead." Dewey could even draw upon scripture to authenticate his hostility to traditional history. "Remember," he warned the Michigan University Students' Christian Association in 1892, "Lot's wife, who looked back, and who, looking back, was fixed into a motionless pillar."

Dewey's conviction that "the object of knowledge is always prospective" could only mean that even the historian should submit himself to what George Santayana, in a criticism of pragmatism, described as "the dominance of the foreground." Such advice as Dewey offered could be accepted only by one who had no quarrel with history—that is, with such retrospective problems as causality and judgment. The very notion of cause implies that things could have been otherwise, and thus we are forced to consider that all judgments, causal as well as moral, depend

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upon evaluating what did happen in light of what could have happened. Dewey seldom addressed himself to such vexing problems, and at times he seemed to accept the givenness of events, which is a short step from concluding that the best way to comprehend history is to identify with it. In 1917 he took that step.

Dewey's behavior seems inevitable in light of his desire to see the study of history emulate scientific methodology. Convinced that we can understand what history is, and was, only through what it will come to be, Dewey would have the historian convert retrospective statements into prospective hypotheses and judgments that may be subsequently verified. Yet one can only wonder whether such an exercise is possible within the nature of historical study. It is not merely that the scientist may certify knowledge by means of experimentation, while the historian must establish truth by asking questions about the past. The real difficulty is that for history to be a science of prediction the historian would have to offer valid reasons for demonstrating the probability that a sequence of events will happen before it happens. Dewey came close to doing this in 1917, and he would in fact do it in 1939, as we shall see; and in both these encounters with history the authority of pragmatism tested itself against the real world of events.

Dewey's deep conviction that the past simply as past is wholly unknowable, that it is devoid of any antecedent reality, raises two difficult questions for anyone confronting the course of historical events. If only the future can verify our ideas about the past, upon what ideas and beliefs do we act here and now? And, conversely, if the past cannot authorize the present, why are we obligated to return to it? A study of Dewey's encounter with Leon Trotsky and his response to World War II will help us understand why he felt the need to remember the past and why he was condemned to misinterpret it.

In 1937, Dewey was asked to head a Commission of Inquiry to examine the charges against Trotsky stemming from the Moscow trials. Trotsky had been accused of directing terrorist attacks on the life of Stalin and other Soviet officials, organizing acts of industrial sabotage to undermine the military preparedness of the Soviet Union, and entering into secret agreements with Germany and Japan. When Dewey agreed to preside over the hearings in Mexico, he became the target of attack not only by Communists but by a number of liberal fellow travelers who saw Trotskyism as a threat to the Popular Front. Trotsky himself had doubts that the aging Dewey—he was seventy-eight in 1937—would be up to the task. "Would he not fall asleep during the hearings?" Isaac Deutscher paraphrases Trotsky as wondering. At the conclusion of the hearings, after seven long days of intense questioning of witnesses and

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examination of enormous documentary evidence, Trotsky made a passionate and eloquent presentation of his case; he concluded by exclaiming to a hushed audience that the counter-trial . . .

has not only not destroyed my faith in the clear, bright future of mankind, but, on the contrary, has given it an indestructible temper. This faith in reason, in truth, in human solidarity, which at the age of eighteen I took with me into the workers' quarters of the provincial Russian town of Nikolaev—this faith I have preserved fully and completely. It has become more mature, but not less ardent.

In the very fact of your Commission's formation—in the fact that, at its head, is a man of unshakable moral authority, a man who by virtue of his age should have the right to remain outside the skirmishes in the political arena—in this fact I see a new and truly magnificent reinforcement of the revolutionary optimism which constitutes the fundamental elements of my life.

The audience sat motionless as Trotsky ended his dramatic peroration, then broke into applause when he expressed his "profound respect" for Dewey, "the educator, philosopher and personification of genuine American idealism." "Anything I can say," remarked the white-haired Dewey when he pronounced the hearings closed, "will be an anti-climax."

The deep moral admiration between Trotsky and Dewey made their ideological differences all the more acute. In early 1938 Trotsky wrote "Their Morals and Ours" in the *New International*, and Dewey responded in the same party journal with a most telling theoretical statement, "Means and Ends." Dewey had been disturbed by the problem of democracy and revolutionary socialism before Trotsky attacked the "banalities" of liberal morality. In Mexico he had questioned Trotsky's version of democracy in action.

Dewey: Was there any organized, recognized method by which, aside from criticism and discussion, the worker could control the committees, the different branches of the Party?

Trotsky: Of the Party or of the Soviet?

Dewey: Of the Party.

Trotsky: It was the right only of Party members to change the Party and to control the Party. In the soviets, it was the right also of non-Party members—the Constitution assured to the workers and peasants the right to remove at any time their representatives to the soviet and to elect new ones.

Dewey: I was not referring to the soviets. I was referring to the governing bodies of the Party.

Trotsky: The bodies of the Party were elected only by the Party members and submitted only to the Party Congress.

Dewey: Under these circumstances, how can you say that it was democratic?

Trotsky: I didn't say it was democratic in the absolute sense. I consider de-

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mocracy not as a mathematical abstraction, but as a living experience of the people. It was a great step to democracy from the old regime, but this democracy in its formal expression was limited to the necessities of the revolutionary dictatorship.

Dewey did not press Trotsky on the issue of democracy during the hearings. The following year he did reply to Trotsky's stirring and controversial article that did much to divide the American Left in the thirties. Trotsky had attacked anarchists and democrats for shirking the harsh realities of class struggle and allegedly succumbing to "absolute" principles of ethics, vague "moral effluvia" preached to revolutionaries and not to their persecutors. Ridiculing the "theory of eternal morals," Trotsky noted that even utilitarian philosophers insisted that the ends justified the means; while the Jesuits, "more consistent and courageous," taught that a means is condoned or condemned depending on the specific end it serves. Since Marxist mortality is governed by the imperative of revolution, "all means are possible which genuinely lead to mankind's emancipation." But the dialectic of means and ends is such that only certain means can lead to that end, only those means that instill "solidarity and unity" in revolutionary workers and imbue them with the "courage" and "consciousness" necessary to carry out their "historic tasks." Addressing himself to American Marxists, Trotsky drew upon episodes in American history to claim that posterity would judge his views in the same light:

> Lincoln's significance lies in his not hesitating before the most severe means, once they were found to be necessary, in achieving a great historic aim posed by the development of a young nation. The question lies not even in which of the warring camps caused or itself suffered the greatest number of victims. History has different yardsticks for the cruelty of the Northerners and the cruelty of the Southerners in the Civil War. A slave-owner who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning or violence breaks the chains—let not the contemptible eunuchs tell us that they are equals before a court of morality!

Dewey's reply indicated how close pragmatism and Marxism stood in their common opposition to traditional moral authority and common advocacy of a praxis-oriented history. Dewey agreed with Trotsky that "the only alternative position to the idea that the end justifies the means is some form of absolutistic ethics based on the alleged deliverance of conscience, or a moral sense, or some brand of eternal truth." Rejecting an ethics based on rule-bound principles, and believing instead that moral criteria are determined by historical circumstances and social relations, Dewey fully agreed with Trotsky that actions are to be judged in view of goals and that ends and means are interdependent and dialecti-

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cally related. Dewey also agreed with Trotsky's Marxist goal of "increasing the power of man over nature and abolishing the power of man over man." Nonetheless, Dewey sharply departed from Trotsky's belief that a "law of historical development determines the particular way in which the struggle is to be carried on." Dewey claimed Trotsky had "deduced" from "a fixed law of social development" in Marxism—"a conception inherited presumably from its Hegelian origins"—the conclusion that violent, revolutionary class struggle is the only means of realizing the goals of human freedom. The principle of the unity of means and ends, Dewey argued, requires a scrupulous examination of means to ascertain their "actual objective consequences" in bringing about desired results. Since both Dewey and Trotsky had ruled out moral judgment in historical inquiry, and since both subscribed to a morality of consequences, the philosopher challenged the revolutionary to be more pragmatic.

> An individual may hold, and quite sincerely as far as personal opinion is concerned, that certain means will "really" lead to a professed and desired end. But the real question is not one of personal belief but of the consequences that will actually be produced by them. So when Mr. Trotsky says that "dialectical materialism knows no dualism between means and ends," the natural interpretation is that he will recommend the use of means that can be shown by their own nature to lead to the liberation of mankind as an objective consequence.

Perhaps the only conclusion to draw from the Dewey-Trotsky debate is that no conclusions can be drawn. Obviously Dewey had come a long way from his World War I stance, when he chastised liberals for confusing the rational use of force with violence and refusing to enter the war in order to control history as an instrument of power. But Dewey could not refute Trotsky from any position of theoretical or philosophical authority. To demonstrate the efficacy or futility of class struggle by historical example would be to concede that the past is not gone forever but directly relevant to the present; to demonstrate the same propositions by praxis would be to withhold judgment until the experiment is verified. The late 1930s, however, was not a time when writers were willing to continue suspending judgment, and since the future seemed so bleak, even Dewey and Trotsky looked to the past for hope—a strange perspective for either a pragmatist or a Marxist. Thus in 1939 we find Dewey and Trotsky returning to 1917 as the year in which history revealed its secrets about the nature of power and the prospects of freedom. Both towering figures, the heroes of Western liberalism and Marxism, still held that the rightness of a political action depends on its intended consequences, and both could therefore feel confident in invoking the judgment of history.

Yet while Trotsky possessed a theory of history, Dewey had only a

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theory of inquiry. In respect to the meaning and direction of events, the revolutionary would be able to assume what the philosopher would be required to explain. In turning to Leninism, therefore, Trotsky could believe that the glorious October Revolution would reenact itself because the nature of history is constituted in terms of recurring patterns and "stages" of development. But in turning to the lessons of Wilsonianism, what conclusions could Dewey draw if history had no determinate character and contained no universal truths about human experience? Seen in this light, the debate with Trotsky appears as a theoretical rehearsal for Dewey's ultimate rendezvous with history. For the approach of World War II compelled Dewey to confront the very question he had put to Trotsky, a philosophical question in search of a historical answer. If Trotsky could not demonstrate that the means of class struggle would lead to the liberation of mankind, could Dewey demonstrate that the methods of democracy would assure the survival of democracy?

Against the threat of fascism the question Dewey had to face became almost a life-or-death proposition in 1939. With the future of democracy in doubt, Dewey addressed himself once again to the question of means and ends in *Freedom and Culture*. Published shortly before the war broke out in September, the book provides another opportunity to observe pragmatic reasoning responding to the demands of the historical moment.

Dewey reaffirmed his defense of the Western tradition of liberalism against a European rationalism that supposedly embodied individuality and freedom in abstract principles of law and order. Contemporary European totalitarianism thus provided further evidence that the excesses of classical philosophy can lead to an absolutism that substitutes the "method of coercion" for the "method of discussion." Along with Charles S. Peirce and William James, Dewey had always believed that the democratic spirit animating empirical method would provide a new basis for authority, a systematic means by which disputes could be settled without resorting to arbitrary, dogmatic authority on the one hand or force and violence on the other. Now more than ever, Dewey reasserted that "democratic ends demand democratic methods for their realization." In 1917 Dewey believed that democracy would be expanded by aligning itself with the forces of history; in 1939 he argued that to resist force with force was to become the captive of the very thing America was fighting—the ideologies of a corrupt and corrupting continent.

> The conflict as it concerns the democracy to which our history commits us is *within* our own institutions and attitudes. It can be won only by extending the application of democratic methods, methods of consultation, persuasion, nego-

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tiation, communication, co-operative intelligence, in the task of making our own policies, industry, education, our culture generally, a servant and an evolving manifestation of democratic ideas. Resort to military force is a first sure sign that we are giving up the struggle for the democratic way of life, and that the Old World has conquered morally as well as geographically—succeeding in imposing upon us its ideals and methods.

By the outbreak of World War II, Dewey's philosophical position had reached a theoretical impasse in the realm of politics and world affairs. His dilemma sprang from two basic premises that proved incompatible with each other. Dewey's commitment to freedom led him to assert that democratic ends necessitated democratic means; his commitment to science led him to assert that truth must be judged by the pragmatic norm of results. Although the first assertion might be proved by logic, the second had to be proved by experience, the historically demonstrated consequences of actions and events. Yet experience could easily deny what logic affirmed. When perusing *Freedom and Culture,* one will find it difficult to know whether one should approve or condemn the Founding Fathers for resorting to "the methods of coercion" to fight the American Revolution, or whether one should praise or denounce the diplomats of the thirties for employing "the methods of discussion" to oppose Hitler. The first method led to success, the second to failure. Both suggest a cruel paradox: if Dewey made democratic means primary, he may have had to sacrifice democratic ends; if he did the obverse he would have had to violate his whole commitment to the efficacy of intelligence as opposed to force.

These dilemmas only point up the fact that Dewey's belief in the unity of means and ends is neither logically persuasive nor historically demonstrable. A strict adherence to democratic methods may not result in the expansion of democratic rights, as the American abolitionists discovered; conversely, militant, nondemocratic actions may produce victories for democracies, as the European antifascists discovered. No more than Trotsky could Dewey prove a causal link between chosen means and a desired end. Indeed one suspects that Dewey's unswerving belief in democratic methods derived not from the dubious and inconclusive lessons of historical experience but from the necessary principles of logic, specifically the principle that a democracy cannot contradict itself; it cannot at the same time have and not have the properties of a democracy. Whether it was on this basis or simply on an act of faith, Dewey insisted that the answer to totalitarian power was democratic culture, and he supported his argument with numerous references to American history. Since the first and last chapters of *Freedom and Culture* pay homage to the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, a student of history cannot help observing what Dewey apparently passed over: that the

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Declaration of Independence justifies the means in relation to the end only because the end is not identical with the means. Hence the right of the people to nullify the compact and to resort to power to safeguard liberty, to realize freedom by means of force.

The more the grim realities of history caught up with Dewey, the less pragmatic he became. When his final rendezvous with history occurred with Hitler's invasion of Poland, Dewey did not hesitate to advise America to stay out of the war at any cost. His position drew bitter denunciations from the "humanist" liberals—Archibald MacLeish, Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford—who attacked "empirical" politics for its "laboratory insulation" that allegedly permitted the intellectual to flee "the responsibilities of moral choice" and expose all America to "Our Guilt in Fascism." The attacks in the *New Republic* and the *Nation* did much to reinforce the older suspicion that pragmatism could not provide the ethical basis for adopting the "right" course of action because Dewey's philosophy could not derive moral judgments from naturalistic premises, the "ought" from the "is." "On all questions which involve conflict between opposing groups, and consequently a choice, and consequently a definite belief that one mode of behavior is better than some other mode, Dewey is unable to commit himself," wrote Henry Bamford Parkes in *The Pragmatic Test* (1941). "Instead of making choices, he confines himself to the pious aspiration that in the future we shall have a science of human nature comparable to the physical sciences—a development which will apparently preclude us from the necessity of holding beliefs and making decisions." In *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, an anthology of critical essays in the Library of Living Philosophers series, published in 1939, George Raymond Geiger of Antioch College explained why Dewey's philosophy could not answer the needs of the historical moment, since the public needs to know what to think about the war, not how to think about it, a criterion of judgment instead of a procedure of inquiry.

Such arguments would perhaps be more persuasive had nonpragmatist thinkers—Catholics, conservative isolationists, Marxists, natural-law theorists, Christian pacifists, social scientists unburdened with values, bards blessed with poetic vision—displayed a keener grasp of the threat of fascism and the need for intervention. The difficulty with Dewey's position on the war is not that a "pragmatic acquiescence" led to appeasement or that the "method of discussion" proved the illusions of liberal innocence. The real difficulty is that Dewey's position turned pragmatism itself on its head. After spending almost his entire intellectual career advising Americans on how to use history to solve problems, insisting that we study the past in light of the present, Dewey was now approaching the present in light of the past, allowing the experi-

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ences of World War I to shape his outlook toward World War II.

Could the lessons of 1917 be invoked to explain the realities of 1939? Dewey now felt that historical experience could indeed offer politically relevant knowledge, and perhaps with the ghost of Randolph Bourne haunting his memory, he was not about to repeat the mistakes of the past. In 1917 he was certain that democracy could align itself with the forces of war; in 1939 he confessed in *Common Sense*, "I hesitate to predict anything whatsoever about the outcome of the present war." World War I encouraged him to advise Americans to keep their focus straight ahead, "with the future, with what is coming next." World War II compelled him to advise Americans to look backward and remember the "dire reaction" that occurred in America as a result of entering the war and the unexpected rise of fascist movements in Europe. Neither the problems of the present nor the probabilities of the future seemed to impinge on Dewey's thoughts when he offered Americans six words of wisdom that transformed pragmatism from a mode of inquiry into an absolute principle and imperative, from the vagaries of knowing history to knowledge of its essential truth: "No matter what happens, stay out." It was now the searing past that came to dominate Dewey's mind and conscience, rendering the great American philosopher less an interpreter of history than its victim.

Obviously Dewey had convinced himself that he had arrived at later truths from earlier errors—realizing, perhaps, that we cannot learn without a little pain and that history is, after all, philosophy teaching by examples, especially bad examples. The lessons of World War I, the Versailles settlement and demands for its revision, and the "Red scare" of 1919 indicated that American democracy would collapse under the strain of another international war. This conviction, shared by liberals like Charles Beard and Trotskyists like Dwight Macdonald, reoriented Dewey's entire perspective on events and rendered pragmatism an unworkable tool of historical analysis. For history now emerged in Dewey's mind as something to be feared rather than mastered, a specter from the past endowed with a curious repetitive power that seemingly could be grasped by reason rather than by experiment. In fact, at times Dewey's reasoning appeared to be based on the logic of causal necessity: given war, reaction will follow. And this premise derived from reasoning that can only be regarded as analogical. Since Dewey never bothered to study the causes of both world wars, it is not surprising that he would see parallels between the two and infer similar consequences from presumably similar events. Yet America's encounter with so unprecedented a phenomenon as Nazism raises a question as old as the study of history itself: can a novel event be dealt with by experience? When Dewey drew upon the experiences of the past to deal with the problems of the pres-

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ent, it was as though he had now discovered essential truths that must be heeded regardless of the consequences. This curiously unpragmatic position, which appears now to affirm the absolute character of things and events, suggests the limits of historical knowledge based upon the presumed lessons of experience, especially an experience drawn from a comparison of two discrete and incomparable situations. Mark Twain knew a good deal about the fallacies of reasoning from a partial resemblance to an identical correspondence in order not to repeat history:

> We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it—and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again—and that is well; but she will also never sit down on a cold one.

Dewey's stance in the late 1930s only made manifest some of the theoretical problems implicit all along in pragmatic philosophy. A philosopher who hesitated to "predict anything whatsoever" about the war may have only been reiterating the Jamesian dictum on the reality of the uncertain; but one who advised Americans to stay out of the war "no matter what happens" was clearly certain that intervention must be resisted for the very reason that its dire results could be predicted. In Dewey's thoughts one finds no whisper of skepticism about the mind's ability to understand what is happening. Nor is there any suggestion of the "fallibilism" and "temporalism" that intellectual historians regard as the genius of pragmatism. This experimental temperament is surely the ideal of the empirical scholar and pragmatic citizen. But often those who believe themselves to be prepared to revise their positions in accordance with new evidence cannot help interpreting the evidence and events in accordance with their positions. It could be said that Dewey confused memory with understanding, the ordeal of personal experience with an interpretation of historical events.

Yet how does one separate the course of experience from the course of events so as to distinguish the continuous nature of memory and knowledge from what could very well be the discontinuities of historical reality? Can pragmatism provide guides for right action in an ambiguous world? On the one hand we are advised to look to human experience for guidance; on the other we must look to future events because knowledge based on past experience cannot be verified. The only valid knowledge is that which derives from experience; yet historical experience cannot guide our actions because present conditions and future events are contingent rather than necessary. Moreover, since acting on ideas changes the conditions on which the ideas were originally formed, and since the consequences of action cannot be predicted, how can we know whether an idea that led to action can explain what resulted from the action

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taken? Even hindsight cannot confirm foresight because knowledge of an approaching danger could lead to action to avert the danger and thereby preclude the possibility of knowing through actual experience whether such a danger had really existed; the historian Marc Bloch called this "the paradox of prevision." The same paradox characterizes Dewey's conviction that all historical inquiry should begin in a "problematic situation."

One can only try to illuminate the dilemmas and paradoxes in Dewey's thoughts and behavior in relation to history. It would be far more difficult to refute or revise his ideas, for in order to do so the universe would have to be constituted by the very moral truths and historical certainties that went out with the gaslights of the last century. By what authority can we claim that such older verities are still live options? Dewey realized that the quest for certainty was an illusion of past ages, and he tried to resolve the crisis in historical knowledge by showing how the problems of causality, judgment, and representation can be overcome to the extent that the historian emulates the scientist. We may admire Dewey for offering such advice, but his own conduct in response to historical events suggests the limits of our admiration. Dewey's answer to the problem of understanding history involved two practical efforts: first, in 1917, to identify knowledge with the "forces" of history in order to control power; second, in 1939, to identify knowledge with the lessons of history in order to renounce power. Now the perplexed historian may well wonder whether a philosophy that tells us what we cannot know can tell us what we must do. The intellectual historian, for example—and especially those literary critics who believe we need go no further than the text to evaluate the adequacy of an idea or doctrine—may find it instructive to consider that Dewey's *Logic* appeared in 1938, the year following Trotsky's counter-trial and a year before Dewey took his stand on World War II. In the text he drew upon his vast learning to demonstrate that genuine empirical knowledge cannot deal with occurrences which took place before the present, and that future events are so different from the past events, because of the contingent nature of reality, that historical experience is useless in understanding history. When the Trotsky report was published in 1938 it laid before the public six hundred pages of investigation of past events. And when Dewey came out against entering the war the following year, his position implied exactly the opposite of the thesis propounded in *Logic*: now historical knowledge could be knowable and history predictable. So much for theory and practice.

John Dewey had reached his eightieth birthday when World War II broke out, perhaps too far along in years to serve as a beacon for younger writers and philosophers. Yet a number of intellectuals had looked to

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Dewey in the thirties, and thus when he lapsed into silence during the early war years some turned elsewhere for guidance. The philosophy of pragmatism, having bravely arisen as a methodology that would replace all traditional forms of authority, had itself lost authority in the eyes of a younger generation.

Ultimately the eclipse of pragmatism involves a double irony. Dewey had offered pragmatism as an answer to the crisis of historical knowledge; yet history itself would demonstrate the limitations of pragmatism as philosophical knowledge. As early as 1908, Arthur O. Lovejoy had observed rather bemusedly a truth that sooner or later was bound to be found out: that pragmatism cannot provide useful knowledge at all. Unable to certify as truthful that which we need to know before we act, pragmatic philosophy cannot provide knowledge precisely when it is most valuable. Verified ex post facto wisdom, Lovejoy wryly noted in *The Thirteen Pragmatisms*, "is as irrelevant and redundant a thing as a coroner's inquest on a corpse is—to the corpse." The double irony is that the philosopher cannot provide genuine knowledge prior to experience and the historian cannot do so after experience. In his numerous writings, Dewey valiantly tried to find a way out of this philosophical impasse—of knowledge knowing its limits as intelligence continually proves unequal to experience. But an examination of his career seems only to bear out Hegel's dictum that what we learn from history is that nobody learns anything from history; and an examination of the pragmatic criterion of knowledge in view of the liberal response to European totalitarian "experiments" seems only to bear out Hobbes's observation that truth is hell seen too late.

Dewey may have written philosophical treatises urging historians as well as citizens to keep their eyes on the foreground, but his own mind remained in the grip of the past. Between the logic of inquiry and the experience of history Dewey symbolized a mind divided against itself, the existential man who, as Kierkegaard might put it, desires to live forward and is condemned to think backward. Had Dewey really been able to "look to future events," as he advised in *Logic*, he would not have allowed himself to assert so dogmatically, "No matter what happens, stay out!" An esteemed philosopher who had courageously declared his independence from history and authority, an intellectual leader whose very conduct, as Trotsky recognized, enabled us to believe once again in old-fashioned virtues and ideals, Dewey ended his career a prisoner of the past, haunted by a memory that now came close to constituting the very seat of authority. One thinks, sadly, of Lot's wife.

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HISTORIOGRAPHY

Reflections on Jewish History

ELIE KEDOURIE

When the Jewish Historical Society of England was founded in 1893, its first president, Lucien Wolf, declared that the work of the Society constituted "a religious and moral task." It was religious, according to Wolf, "because Judaism can have no distinctive existence apart from its great historic sanctions." It was "a specifically moral task" because "beside cultivating historical knowledge we shall cultivate historic spirit." There was "nothing more essential to the moral well-being of a people," Lucien Wolf asserted, "than the historic spirit." This spirit bore the same relation to the community as "personal repute" did to the individual. The historic spirit, he argued, is "the sense of national honour, the consciousness of a high level of conduct to be maintained, a standing proscription of mean actions." The historic spirit, in short, was "destined to make clear to the meanest of us the sacred mission of Judaism, and to fit us for its accomplishment."

This evocation and celebration of "historical knowledge and the historic spirit" by Lucien Wolf should make clear that, when it was founded, the Jewish Historical Society of England constituted a local Jewish manifestation of a wide and powerful European intellectual movement—a movement which, together with that which led to the establishment and the development of the natural sciences, has, since the end of the eighteenth century, transformed our view of the world and of our place in it. This movement took its rise from the belief that there was great value in the historical study of the past—value which in turn stemmed from the view that the truth about men is to be discovered by examining what they do and what they make, their actions and utterances, their products and institutions in all their ceaseless change and immense variety. The study of the historical past, in other words, is predicated on the assumption that there does not exist a uniform human nature which is the same everywhere and at all times, that human nature is in continuous change, and that the intelligibility and coherence of human activity are to be sought, not behind or above this ceaseless changing, but in the very change itself. If such are the organizing ideas of the historical enterprise, then it should not surprise us at all that the traditional Jewish outlook—shaped and maintained by the rabbis who, until the Enlightenment, were the exclusive guardians of Jewish learning—should have been indifferent to history and generally incurious about historical change. For the rabbis, revelation, whether written or oral, handed down to "Moses our rabbi" on Mount Sinai, was the only truth. It was to be studied in every generation and its furthest implications explored and pondered. The Torah, however, was not subject to change, and its norms and injunctions applied at all times, everywhere. When, therefore, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Zunz, his friends, and disciples began to write what is recognizably Jewish history, this was positive evidence that the Jews of the German-speaking lands were now becoming part of this European intellectual movement which was to enlarge so remarkably men's understanding of themselves. The foundation of the Jewish Historical Society of England at the end of the nineteenth century, within a community appreciably smaller than that of the German-speaking Jews, and where academic and in-

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tellectual concerns were somewhat less prominent, is witness to the continued vitality and attractiveness of this European intellectual current.

If the rabbis attached no importance whatever to the study of historical change—might even have dismissed it as on the whole a vain and useless occupation—this is not to say that there is a necessary or inevitable conflict between the study of the historical past and what the rabbis study and teach. Everyone knows how much time, energy, and ingenuity were consumed on both sides in the so-called conflict between science and religion. After a century and more of discussion which now seems in large part otiose, it ought to have become clear to us that what scientists—basing themselves on the always provisional assumptions and hypotheses of their various sciences—may say, for example, about the physics and chemistry of the human body will not settle questions worth raising about conduct, or resolve moral dilemmas, or still feelings of spiritual inadequacy or dissatisfaction. If the case had been otherwise, religion would long ago have been banished to the remote and superstitious parts of the globe.

The same is true of historical research. What the historian does is consider actions, institutions, or artifacts simply in respect of their pastness. From what he has present before him—whether a building or a painting or a document—the historian attempts to evoke a past. His activity, therefore, is one of abstraction. Confronted, say, with a building, the historian qua historian is concerned not with its aesthetic quality, or with the engineering or architectural problems which it poses, or with the uses to which it can be put, or with its value as a piece of real estate; rather he is concerned with the building solely as evidence of the outlook and the purposes of its builders, and of its successive inhabitants and owners. And what he has to say on this score can provide little guidance to the student of aesthetics, to the architect or engineer, to the estate agent or economist. Nor is what he has to say either superior or inferior to what is said by those whose concern is art or science or the making of money, each one of whom similarly abstracts from the one building that aspect which is of particular concern to himself. We can say that, like science, historical research is tangential to the concerns of religion—inasmuch as religion is engaged in exploring the meaning of an ever-present and changeless divine revelation, and in providing guidance for believers in the conduct of their lives.

But when Lucien Wolf, in addition to historical knowledge, invoked the "historic spirit" and enjoined his audience to cultivate it, what he had in mind, as his words clearly show, was somewhat different from history as I have tried to describe its practice and significance since its appearance within the circle of European culture during the last two hundred years or so. It is also, in a way, considerably older and more familiar. Wolf's invocation of the historic spirit is, in some respects, not without analogy to Joshua ben Sira's "Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us." Ben Sira's words express a universal human need for a self-identity which finds satisfaction in the establishing of one's antecedents and the identification of one's ancestors. The genealogies of which the Bible is full do, among other things, serve such a purpose. But what Wolf was looking for in history seems to go beyond this traditional quest—seems, in fact, to be the reflection of a tendency which had become prevalent in the Western culture of his day, and which has since spread to almost every part of the world.

This is the tendency to seek validation for one's values in the past as such. On this view, the past, simply because it is one's past, is seen to give rise to, to sustain, and to validate one's present way of life. The memory of a shared past, Ernest Renan argued, is what holds a nation together. It is this state of mind which is responsible for the extraordinary florescence of national histories which were believed to provide proofs of national existence and to buttress claims of national rights. That of course was not what Wolf himself was trying to do—not that, but something similar. He was appealing to history to establish "the sacred mission of Judaism."

But the rabbis, as guardians of "the sacred mission of Judaism," were indifferent to history—and rightly so, since the revelation they studied and expounded was divine, extrahistorical, timeless. And the quest for historical knowledge in the new European mode would have no bearing to speak of on their own concerns, just as rabbinical concerns

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should have been seen by historians of Jews and Judaism as tangential to their own particular pursuit. For, after all, their mutual relation is similar to that of lawyer and legal historian. The lawyer is concerned with devising ways in which laws, the existence and forms of which he takes for granted, can be applied to a variety of situations which the lawgiver may or may not have foreseen; his, in other words, is a present and practical interest. The legal historian, by contrast, seeks to elucidate when and how laws came into existence, and how their scope and meaning changed with the passage of time; for him, whether a law is operative or obsolete is beside the point.

But if between rabbi and historian there is, if not mutual indifference, then at any rate no ground for conflict, it is otherwise when history or the past is called upon to illustrate and validate the "sacred mission of Judaism." To search for such validation is to concede that the values of Judaism are not self-validating, that the truths of Judaism require propping up by the help of an ancient pedigree. This appeal to the historic spirit would strike the rabbinical mind as difficult to reconcile with its traditional outlook. The reason is not in doubt. This desire to seek certainty and self-identity in history is yet one more result of the hold which secularization has achieved over the European mind and, to a greater or lesser extent, wherever European culture has been received and accepted. The secularist outlook, whatever else it is, cultivates and thrives on the conviction that our world is open and unmysterious, that all that happens can be fully analyzed and accounted for. But, paradoxical as it may seem, when revelation has ceased to carry conviction, there still remains a need which craves satisfaction and which seeks satisfaction and fulfillment in the past as repository and guarantor of values—the past which here, therefore, becomes a substitute for religion. Whether the substitute can really yield the satisfaction or still the craving which religion is now thought incapable of doing is a matter for debate.

What is not open to doubt is that before the nineteenth century no Jew would have been found to invoke the historic spirit to illustrate and defend "the sacred mission of Judaism." This is not to say that before then the Jews did not have a very vivid consciousness of their past, or that this consciousness did not suffuse and color their self-view. It is only to say, rather, that before modern times there would have been no need felt to substitute a presumed truth about the Jewish past for the truth of revelation, or to seek to prove or buttress the truth of revelation by the help of historical truths. But, in fact, from the very earliest period of their existence Jews had a firm and clear view of their self-identity—a self-identity defined by the transactions which they believed had taken place between God and their forefathers. With the passage of the centuries this self-view persisted, but other self-views came to be added to, and perhaps to modify, the earliest one. So that today Jewish self-identity is complex, not to say complicated, to the point that a modern Jew may find it extraordinarily difficult to hold in view and accept all the successive self-identities which have resulted from a varied and troubled history. It has become so difficult that many attempts have been made, and others will no doubt continue to be made, to fasten on one self-identity or another and to declare that it alone expresses authentic Jewishness—that for which Jews stand and which should guide them in the future.

The oldest self-identity is no doubt that which affirms that Jews are "sons of the Covenant." Once upon a time, that is, Jews were the object of divine election, and it is this momentous event which gives meaning to their subsequent history, and should serve them as a guide always. This particular view of the Jewish past is extraordinarily complex, and its reverberations down the centuries are no less astonishing. Jews, according to this particular account—an account which has shown a tenacious power of endurance—are the descendants of Abraham, who left his native land and became a wandering stranger in obedience to divine command. God's covenant with Abraham, in which he was promised a land which his seed would inherit, was renewed at Mount Sinai and became a bond between God and each individual Jew. In connection with both covenants the theme of exile and alienation is prominent. Thus, for example, Genesis XV:13, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years." Or Deuteronomy XXVIII:64, where one of the

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punishments for transgressing the Sinaitic Covenant is that "the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other." Bearing in mind the long centuries of dispersion and political powerlessness which followed the clash with Rome, one is not surprised that these past encounters with the divine and the predictions associated with them should have had such a tremendous evocative power for successive generations of Jews, should have provided them with an explanation of current predicaments, and guidance as to how they should be confronted and surmounted.

Another piece of the past which was endowed with scriptural authority and which formed part of the traditional Jewish self-view is that relating to the exercise of power by a Jewish ruler in a Jewish polity. In contrast to their neighbors, the Jews did not entertain a belief in the divinity or sacredness of the ruler. Even more, the version of the past which generation transmitted to generation included many episodes the lesson of which inculcated skepticism, not to say mistrust, of political power and the life of politics. Preeminent among these episodes is that so powerfully described in I Samuel in which the Jews ask Samuel for a king—a request which leads to an itemized description of the oppressions that such a king will practice and which ends: "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." Again, in so many other episodes relating to the kingdoms of Judah and of Israel, there is shown a duality of authority between what we might call temporal and what we might call spiritual authority—between king and prophet. Not only is duality assumed, but also antagonism is exhibited between prophetic values and kingly values, with the prophetic values emerging invariably as the superior and the enduring ones. This is a great contrast to the caesaropapism—to borrow a term from Christian history—which in one form or another characterized the polities of the ancient world, and of Byzantium and Islam. The view of their past encapsulated in these biblical narratives, like the stories of the Covenant and the references to exile as the fate which Jews would suffer for their sins, seems to have been reinforced by the political experience of the Jews in the Dispersion, while, in turn, it gave coherence and meaning to this experience. Political skepticism, mistrust of power and of its exercise, an awareness of the narrow limits of what politics can really achieve are recognizable features of the traditional Jewish ethos which the lessons of this transmitted past inculcated.

By the late nineteenth century there had occurred a great change in the self-view of European Jews—at any rate in the self-view of the Jews of Central and Western Europe and of North America. The change may be exemplified by the short description of the Jewish Historical Society of England's aims quoted earlier. These included the promotion of the study of the history of "the Jews of the British Empire," and of the "historical role they have played in this country and the Commonwealth." Or to put it in the words used at the celebration of the Society's semi-jubilee in 1920, the Society believed that it was the "paramount duty of the Jews of England to record with all possible fulness the story of their life in this country . . . to narrate their services to the State . . . and to describe that struggle for toleration which culminated in the full admission of English Jews to national rights and obligations." These words signal a universe of discourse far removed from that of the biblical narratives and the rabbinical glosses upon them. What underlies these words is a self-view in which exile and dispersion do not loom very large.

But apart from exile and dispersion, the traditional self-view had another component which derived not so much from the Bible as from later experience, and from the theory which the rabbis derived from this experience. In this later experience, the Jews—exiled, dispersed, and politically powerless—not only entertained great skepticism and distrust concerning political action and the life of politics; they were also taught—and experience confirmed the teaching—that they were apart from the nations and kingdoms of the world, and that the only proper, indeed the only safe, stance to adopt toward these nations and kingdoms was one of passivity and withdrawal. To speak of the "Jews of the British Empire," to seek to "narrate their services to the State" therefore argues a considerable revolution in the Jewish self-view.

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This revolution may, in brief, be described as twofold. It meant, in the first place, that religion was now seen as a private affair, having little or nothing to do with public activities. This distinction signaled a break in the traditional outlook in which religion governed both public and private life and could not but do so. For Jews to see themselves as citizens of a modern—usually European—state different from their fellow citizens only in the religion which they practiced at home and in the synagogue was problematic. Problematic because it effected a hiatus between Jewish existence, as it was now supposed to be, and the traditional vision of its past as well as its future. It was to see Jews, not as especially subjects of divine election and a divine plan of salvation, but as only yet another group taking its due place in the unfolding of universal history. Between this new vision (the creation of the European Enlightenment) and the traditional one, the strains could be quite considerable and the differences not easily reconcilable.

In the second place, the new vision was predicated on the assumption of what might be called a social contract between Jewish citizens and their fellow non-Jewish citizens—a contract decreeing equality in rights and obligations and making religion irrelevant to civic and political action. In this view of things, politics and political action were the prerogative of the citizen, something not to be shunned with fear and suspicion, but to be practiced with confidence as the means of providing for both private and public welfare. It is in this perspective that it makes sense for Jews to "narrate their services to the state" and to commemorate the role they have played in country and commonwealth. For a lengthy period few, if any, doubted that this social contract would hold, would indeed become ever firmer. But, as we know, beginning in the 1930s, all over the European continent the contract was unilaterally, arbitrarily, violently broken and for a decade, and more Jews, were treated not as fellow citizens, but as outlaws whose lives and possessions could be seized and destroyed at pleasure. A merciful Providence prevented such an outcome in the English-speaking world. But the experience of the thirties and the forties is not easily accommodated within the historical scheme of the Enlightenment which the Jews of the West adopted when they took their place in European political society. It is, on the other hand, much more easily accommodated within the traditional self-view, with its accent on exile and dispersion, and with its skepticism and mistrust of politics.

Meanwhile, another historical self-view has vied with the one derived from the European Enlightenment for the suffrages of modern Jews; it is that constructed and propagated by Zionism. This self-view has elements in common with the traditional one. It, too, speaks of exile and redemption; it, too, looks upon the Jews as a separate people with their own special destiny. But this destiny it sees in purely mundane terms. It is to form a sovereign European-type state, and to attain this end by political action, "like all the nations"—in the words the elders used to the prophet Samuel. But between this self-view and the traditional one the strains are hardly less great, and their coexistence, let alone their merger, hardly less problematic. For in the Zionist self-view, trust in the efficacy and beneficence of political action is central, and the redemption comes about by human action. Such human action is to inaugurate the return of the Jews to their ancestral land and to secure their continued presence there. Since, in such a vision, only life on the ancestral land can preserve and foster Jewish values, it becomes a puzzle how Jewish life and Jewish values were secured and preserved —as in fact they were—in the long centuries of exile and dispersion. Modernity, then, whether in the guise of the Enlightenment or in that of Zionism, seems to involve puzzles, ambiguities, and tensions in the way in which Jews view themselves and their history—puzzles, ambiguities, and tensions from which the traditional self-view seems largely immune. But whether this traditional self-view can speak to modern men and command their acquiescence is itself problematic.

These competing self-views, their mutual tensions and ambiguities, constitute the (ever shifting) framework and distinguishing landmarks of Jewish history. They provide that which will engage the interest, not only of mere historians, but also of anyone who has ever asked himself what it means to be a Jew.

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Madonna with Child: Vietnam 1975

GREG MOSS

The village was not unlike others couched
In rain forest, pummeled by sun. Until ranks
Of bandoliered soldiers began charging the barbed buttresses
To wet hot dusty streets with their blood.
I lay low by a well where the marketplace stood

And shot my fill of reel war.
Retreating soldiers, until the tanks came,
Hustled old rice-hatted women
Piggyback, and carried by twos, blood steeped
Blankets tied round poles, looped

Under like killed game. Gathered in tall
Grass, we watched nine civilians
Break from a hit café like tree-startled
Crows, almost make cover, then swoon
In billowed heaps beside the Buddhist shrine.

Later, after the tanks came returning thunder
For thunder, we lumbered to the still, huddled,
Black clad shapes to find something weirdly
Sacred amidst all this slaughter:
A live girl bearing forth a daughter

Between bloodied thighs: solemn, scared
Like a lame horse, tearless as the tank's
Thunder flourished and crackling volleys rained
Against a roiling sky to a Buddha's serene smile
And eight dead crows and Madonna with Child.

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A Scientific Education

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

If one is lucky, great or at least extremely significant teachers appear in one's student life at about the time that one can appreciate them. Too much of a mismatch in sophistication leads to the sort of mutual frustration that was expressed by the late E. U. Condon, a very distinguished physicist who, when I met him, was just emerging from a class at Washington University in St. Louis. He remarked, probably more in sorrow than in anger, "I have just been casting false pearls before genuine swine." It was my incredible good fortune to encounter three remarkable teachers of physics at just about the appropriate moment. They were—going backward in time—J. Robert Oppenheimer, Julian Schwinger, and Philipp Frank. It was Philipp Frank who first convinced me that learning modern physics was about the most exciting thing that a sentient human being could do. Julian Schwinger taught me in detail what modern physics was, and it was because of what I learned in his courses that I could begin the research which I was able to continue at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton during the two years 1957–59, when Oppenheimer was its director.

A great deal has been written about Robert Oppenheimer. Two of the best recent books are Freeman Dyson's *Disturbing the Universe* and *Robert Oppenheimer: Letters and Recollections,* edited by Alice Kimball Smith and Charles Weiner. I will not review here his career, his work in physics, his role in the atomic bomb project, or his subsequent encounter with McCarthyism, which ended his career as a government adviser. I will, rather, concentrate on the impact that Oppenheimer had on me as a teacher. In 1957 I had finished a two-year appointment at the Harvard Cyclotron Laboratory, where I was what was called the "house theoretician," meaning that I was available to assist experimental physicists with theoretical questions if any arose. But since the Harvard experimental physicists knew as much theoretical physics as I did, or more, I do not recall having been asked anything, so I simply did my own work.

After two delightful years of this I was looking for a job. I do not have a clear recollection of what the job situation was in 1957; very likely, if one was looking for a proper teaching job in a university, it was not very good. But finding a teaching job in a university was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do. I was having much too good a time doing research full time. Indeed, after having spent four years working my way through graduate school as a teaching assistant, *not* having to teach seemed like a splendid vacation. One of the young Harvard professors then held what was generally assumed to be the record for the number of years of postdoctoral appointments without having to teach. I think it was seven years, and he was an inspiration to all of us. I later managed to break his record by one year; but by that time money was flowing into physics because of the post-Sputnik surge in government support for science, so his was a vastly more significant achievement.

One of the few places which seemed to offer just what I was looking for was the Institute for Advanced Study, so I applied. Among the happiest days of my entire life was the day I received a letter from Oppenheimer announcing my acceptance—with a stipend which I think was four thousand dollars a

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year, a financial advancement for me. The appointment was nominally for one year, but finding a job at the end of that year was a bridge I decided I would jump off when I came to it. I was then twenty-six.

My first encounter with Oppenheimer was not in Princeton but in Cambridge. He had come to Harvard that spring to give a series of lectures for the general public. I don't recall the precise subject matter, but I do have a vivid recollection of two of those wonderful, white-gloved, blue-haired, flower-hatted elderly Boston or Cambridge ladies who, in this case, sat in front of me, one clutching the arm of the other for reassurance when, at one point in the lecture, Oppenheimer actually wrote down an equation. In any event, after the first of the series I made my way to the podium to introduce myself, since I was about to spend the next year, at least, at his institution. I recall that when I approached him he was at first not very friendly. I imagine that, as a sort of celebrity, he had had enough of random people coming up to him and asking foolish questions. But I managed to explain who I was and that I would surface at Princeton in the fall—at which point his entire demeanor changed. He began listing the people who would be there, and it sounded like a who's who of modern theoretical physics. He ended by saying that "Lee and Yang"—Tsung-Dao Lee and Chen Ning Yang, who had been instrumental in the discovery that parity symmetry (the symmetry between left and right) was violated for which they would, that fall, win the Nobel Prize—"will be there to teach us about parity, and we are going to have a ball." At this point I think I would have gone through a flaming hoop for the man.

In the event, I came to spend two years at the Institute, and during that time I never heard Oppenheimer give a technical lecture. I do not think he was actually doing research in physics, and we used to speculate whether he ever put pen to paper to calculate anything. But remarkably he seemed to have a total and instantaneous comprehension of everything. This manifested itself in the weekly seminar. Oppenheimer sat in the front row of the small seminar room with the *Geheimrats*, local and visiting. (A Viennese physicist once told me that in the great days in Vienna seating assignments in the colloquium were determined by the assignment of a number called the *bunz-moment*, which was the product of the intrinsic importance of the visitor times the distance he had come.) Oppenheimer smoked incessantly and from time to time would offer a racking cough to the general ambiance. The junior members—like myself—cowered in the back row.

After a few months I came to the conclusion that, given the incredible talent assembled there, it was unlikely that anyone would be interested in hiring me for anything in physics and so I had little to lose by enjoying myself at the seminars. I began to ask questions. By and large Oppenheimer tolerated these interruptions although he could, when he thought either the speaker or a questioner was talking nonsense, be incredibly cutting. I remember once, after asking some astronomically stupid question and being told so by Oppenheimer, that my colloquium neighbor whispered in my ear, "Bernstein, this is a good day to stay down in the trenches with the rest of the troops."

The kind of science teaching (if one wants to call it that) at these seminars was the dialogue of professionals. As Oppenheimer once put it, "What we don't understand we explain to each other." An undergraduate, and even most doctoral students, would have been lost. In fact, we postdoctorals had to work extremely hard to keep up, usually trying to read and discuss the relevant papers before the seminar. In these seminars Oppenheimer was more than simply a sort of master of ceremonies; he was more like an orchestra conductor—clarifying, challenging, and refining. Sometimes this would get out of hand, especially when he had some fixed a priori notion of the importance of something or someone. But this, at least as I saw it, was far outweighed by his ability to focus ideas and to convince us, by some undefinable quality of his personality, that these ideas were terribly precious.

The most difficult step in the education of a scientist is generally the one that takes the young person from being a student to being a professional. In my case the teacher who played the decisive role at this point was Julian Schwinger. The first course I took with Schwinger was in the fall of 1950, the fall of my senior year. But even before I set foot in

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the class, Schwinger's name was a kind of legend among the scientifically oriented students. He was in his mid-thirties, but by then he had been doing original theoretical physics for some twenty years.

A few years ago, in the course of writing a *New Yorker* profile, I had occasion to interview I. I. Rabi, the very distinguished Columbia University physicist who had, in fact, discovered Schwinger. He told me, "It was sort of romantic in a way. You can fix it to a year: 1935." At that time Rabi was trying to understand a celebrated paper by Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen on an apparent paradox in the quantum theory. He said: "I was reading the paper, and my way of reading a paper was to bring in a student and explain it to him. In this case the student was Lloyd Motz, who's now a professor of astronomy at Columbia. We were arguing about something, and after a while Motz said there was someone waiting outside the office and asked if he could bring him in. He brought in this kid." Schwinger was sixteen. "So I told him to sit down some place, and he sat down. Motz and I were arguing and this kid pipes up and settles the argument. . . . And I said, 'Who the hell is this?' "

It turned out that Schwinger was failing a number of courses at City College, where he was enrolled. But Rabi got him into Columbia anyway, and under Rabi's firm hand Schwinger blossomed—even making Phi Beta Kappa. By the time he graduated, he had his research done for his Ph.D. thesis, but stayed on for two more years to fulfill the doctoral requirements. Rabi then sent him to California to Oppenheimer. During World War II Schwinger, young as he was, became the guiding theoretical genius behind the development of radar. He then went to Harvard, where I believe he was the youngest full professor ever named. As I have mentioned, my first actual contact with him was in a course in quantum mechanics that I took in the fall of 1950.

I believe that there is an element of theater in all great teaching. One may well wonder what it could possibly be in a course on quantum mechanics, and I will explain. The nominal starting time for the class was 11:00 A.M. Around that hour the classroom began to fill up with the forty or fifty people who were taking, or auditing, the course. These were not only graduate students in physics and mathematics, together with a few undergraduates like myself, but many of the junior, and occasionally the senior, faculties in these disciplines along with a few chemists tossed in for good luck. Schwinger, who in those days drove a light blue Cadillac, would arrive at some random time between eleven and eleven-thirty. Someone would spot the Cadillac and we would all rush for seats in the classroom. He would then lecture nonstop for well over an hour, doing the most intricate calculations imaginable, *without notes.* Formulas appeared and disappeared, melted into other formulas as if by magic.

Schwinger had certain characteristic phrases such as "we can effectively regard," which became part of the student lingua franca. A friend of mine once concocted a model Schwinger sentence, which began, "Although one is not perfectly zero, we can effectively regard. . . ." Schwinger, at least in those days, pronounced "nuclear" as "nucular," and some of his students acquired this pronunciation as well.

That was the superficial theater. The real theater was the content of the lectures. Whenever Schwinger taught one of these courses, he simply re-created the subject. It was as if he were presenting three original research papers a week—and indeed many of these lectures were eventually published as research papers. This made the lectures quite difficult to follow for relative newcomers to the subject like myself, so we would sometimes go down to MIT, where Victor Weisskopf taught quantum mechanics. Weisskopf, who is also a great teacher, was nearly the mirror image of Schwinger. His classes had a marvelous homespun quality. All the students called him by his nickname, Viki, and interrupted frequently. Weisskopf rarely got any formula quite right on the blackboard. (I have been told that this was also true of Oppenheimer.) Schwinger almost never got anything wrong on the blackboard, and questions from the audience were rare. Each man in his own way illuminated the mysteries of the subject—Viki by bringing it down to earth and Schwinger by pushing the mathematics and its physical meaning to its limits. During this period it was a sort of "in" joke among physicists that Schwinger had solved nearly every problem in unpublished lecture notes. I

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still have my notes and now, thirty years later, I still find revelations in them. The simplest imaginable problems were done in several ways, each of them novel. I recall that at one of the lectures I sat next to Abraham Klein (now a professor at the University of Pennsylvania), who was a junior fellow at Harvard and who became my thesis adviser. He was advanced enough to appreciate what Schwinger was up to, and at one point he said to himself, "It's like poetry." When I became a graduate student, and later a postdoctoral fellow, I audited Schwinger's course—which changed constantly—at least three times. No one was surprised that in 1965 he won the Nobel Prize; it had only been a question of when.

The sequence of events that led to my taking Schwinger's course was very far from obvious, but in it Philipp Frank played the decisive role. I entered Harvard in 1947 with absolutely no intention of becoming a scientist. The one science course I had taken in high school had been a disaster; I had learned nothing. Mathematics, at which I was proficient, was then taught in the same spirit that Latin was—as something that would "improve your mind," whatever *that* means. One never got a glimmering of the notion that mathematics might be a creative discipline. As I wrote once in this journal, I recall having the impression that Euclid was some sort of textbook publisher, like McGraw-Hill.

The only skill that I thought that I had was writing and, as I remember it, I thought that I might become a journalist. In those days Harvard had just begun its general education program, which I understand has now been abandoned. Everyone then was required to take one of the general education courses in science—courses which were to science what the Harvard requirement that each undergraduate be able to swim one or more laps of the pool was to that vital activity. There were levels of difficulty among these courses and, needless to say, I chose the easiest one. It went along in an amiable tedium until sometime late in the fall, when we touched on relativity and the quantum theory. That was, for me, love at first sight. In retrospect it is hard to understand why. I did not have the remotest background to help me appreciate what these theories were trying to achieve, but nonetheless the idea that lengths could shrink and time could expand set me off. I decided I would try to teach myself the theory of relativity, undaunted by the prevalent myth that only sixteen, or maybe twenty-eight, people in the world were said to understand it. My idea was that I would get a very solid book on the subject and read it very slowly. I went to the Widener Library, and looked in the catalogue under Einstein, and then took out his book *The Meaning of Relativity*. That was the worst possible choice, since the book is an extremely technical series of lectures that Einstein had delivered at Princeton in the 1920s. I understood essentially not one word. It was the first time in my life, I think, when I had tried with every ounce of neurons to understand something and failed totally. I went to the professor of my course—the noted historian of science I. Bernard Cohen—and explained my dilemma. He told me (and for this I owe him an eternal debt) that that very spring Philipp Frank was teaching another general education course devoted to these matters and that, while it was a bit irregular, there was no real reason why I could not take both courses in parallel. Moreover, he explained, Frank was a good friend of Einstein's, having been his successor at the German University in Prague. Nothing short of an atomic bomb explosion in Cambridge would have kept me from enrolling in that course.

Apart from this, I knew nothing about Professor Frank, and I remember, as we gathered on the first day of the class in the large lecture room in the physics building, wondering what the great man would look like. As I write this I have in front of me two photographs of Professor Frank. The first one is on an announcement of a lecture series that he was to give in the summer of 1938 at various American universities. As the series began, the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia and he and his wife remained here. The photograph shows Philipp as he was in early middle age. Then, as later, his scalp was undisturbed by the presence of hair. But in this first photograph he has an odd brushlike mustache, which disappeared a decade later. He is also wearing those small, round, dark-rimmed spectacles which I have always associated with central European intellectuals. His expression is uncharacteristically severe. The

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second photograph adorns a pamphlet which contains addresses given by a group of us in his memory at a service at Harvard Memorial Chapel in October 1966. He had died on July 21 of that year, at the age of eighty-two. I like this photograph much better. The mustache has vanished and the spectacles are now rimless. His expression shows the beginning of the indelible smile that always preceded an anecdote or a joke. First would come the smile, usually followed by "I remember very well, really. . . ." This was an understatement, since Philipp had almost total recall of everything he had ever learned—to say nothing of entire conversations, some of which had taken place fifty years earlier. At this point it was crucial not to say anything while Philipp, again with a series of smiles, resurrected from his memory, say, a meeting with Einstein during the First World War; a classroom encounter with Ludwig Boltzmann; a dialogue with Ernst Mach; a description of a trip he had taken on the River Don with P. A. M. Dirac; the details of the assassination of Moritz Schlick by a student whose girl friend had been having an affair with Schlick; or his impressions of Kafka in Prague.

I came to know all this much later. But in the spring of 1948 there he was walking into the classroom with a slight limp that I think was a souvenir of a childhood encounter with a streetcar in Vienna. He began his lecture by describing the organization of the course. We would meet once a week for about three hours, which were to be broken in the middle where Professor Frank said he "would make a certain interval." The interval was to be followed by a lengthy question period. His accent was a little difficult to place. It was predominantly characteristic of his native Vienna, but I later discovered that he had a fluent command of French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Czech. He also read Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek and could write in these languages as well. I finally decided that his present language, English, had been built like the topmost of the seven cities of Troy and that it contained the ruins of all the preceding languages he had lectured and taught in. He once explained to me how he had studied English in Prague. At that time (the middle thirties), he said, there were three factions in the university: the Nazis, who feared that the Russians would invade Czechoslovakia; the Communists, who were sure it would be invaded by the Germans; and the Jews, who were sure that either event would be a disaster. The only thing they all agreed on was that the university should hire an instructor to teach them English and thus facilitate their emigration to the United States.

Professor Frank's course began in what, for me, was an entirely unexpected way—with a discussion of Euclidean geometry. We learned that there were two kinds of geometry: an empirical geometry—earth measure—in which the propositions become statements that can be tested experimentally, and a mathematical geometry in which the propositions are relations among abstract entities and are therefore without empirical content. We learned (and for me this was a revelation) that from a mathematical point of view there were alternate geometries to that of Euclid and that, in particular, the geometry of great circles on the surface of a sphere was one in which the sum of the base angles of triangles added up to *more* than 180 degrees. We learned that Einstein's theory of gravitation made it plausible that the empirical geometry of space and time was one of these non-Euclidean types. Professor Frank then discussed the evolution of the ideas of motion, again, beginning with the Greeks. He traced the history of the concept of inertia through the Middle Ages to Galileo, and he carefully explained the theological element in Newtonian mechanics: Newton's conviction that absolute space and time were the sensoria of God. Then he told us about Ernst Mach's devastating critique of Newton in Mach's *Science of Mechanics.* (Mach had been one of Professor Frank's illustrious predecessors at the German University.) He explained to us the influence of Mach on the young Einstein. Professor Frank had just written his marvelous biography of Einstein, ***Einstein: His Life and Times.*** (One of the numerous absurdities that festoon the world of publishing is that this book not only is out of print but was never properly published in English at all. Knopf published an abbreviated version of the German edition, which inspired Einstein to the pun *"Herr Knopf hat geknopft"* [Mr. Knopf has buttoned it up]. No one has troubled to take the original German edition and

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translate it into English. I would do it myself if I knew German well enough.) This was the first time I heard what has now become the standard version of how Einstein was led to the theory of relativity. Einstein had explained to Professor Frank—and later wrote about it in his *Autobiographical Notes*, now available in a centenary edition from the Open Court publishers—that when he was sixteen he tried to imagine physics from the point of view of someone who could ride on a light beam. He realized that to such an observer light would no longer appear to be an oscillatory wave motion. Hence such an observer would have a criterion by which he could decide that he was moving with the speed of light in empty space. This, he apparently reasoned, was a violation of the principle of relativity, which asserts that by no observation can one decide whether one is moving uniformly or is at rest. But Newtonian mechanics allows one to move at any speed, so it was in violation of a principle of relativity that also embraced electromagnetic phenomena. I wish that, during the nearly twenty years when I knew Professor Frank, I had gone into this with him more critically. Why did Einstein have such a firm belief in the principle of relativity at the age of sixteen? And if he did have it, why did it take him ten years to produce the theory of relativity? Perhaps when Einstein's complete papers are published one may find further clues, or perhaps not—in which case, at least for me, the creative leap will still remain mysterious.

Next, in Professor Frank's course, we came to the quantum theory: the wave nature of matter and the uncertainty principles which express the ultimate limitations on measurement on the atomic scale. All this was done with mathematics no more complicated than what I had learned in high school. To do it, of course, required that Professor Frank have an absolute mastery of the subject matter. Nothing is simpler in physics than to conceal one's confusion over fundamental principles behind a smoke screen of mathematics. It was in this spirit that Professor Frank once explained to me his criterion for good popular science writing: not only must it teach the layman, but it should also teach the professional by calling his attention to the general principles often simply taken for granted. After the "interval" Professor Frank would sometimes go into more detail for those—and I was not one—who knew "a little of mathematics." These sessions made it clear to me what I did not know, and by the end of my freshman year I decided that, no matter what, I would learn mathematics. I began a perpetual crash program that included summers and that eventually resulted in my majoring in mathematics and taking a master's degree in it before eventually switching, full time, to the physics department. It also convinced me that, whatever else, I must continue to study with Professor Frank.

Somehow I managed to persuade my adviser to allow me to take a reading course with Professor Frank in my sophomore year. This was an eccentric thing to do as a sophomore, and the greatness of Harvard—as it was and as I hope it still is—lay in the fact that someone like myself was allowed to wander serendipitously through the curriculum. I think I changed my formal major about four times: physics, philosophy, history of science, and finally mathematics. *I* knew where I was going, and somehow knew that, given my inadequacies in preparation and my lack of confidence about becoming a scientist, I needed to take that strange and often circuitous route to get there.

Through all this wandering, working with Philipp remained a constant. In my sophomore year we read many of the classics in the philosophy of science. Beginning with Aristotle, we studied medieval philosophers like Aquinas and William of Occam. We read Hume, Locke, and Mill. We read Mach, and we also worked our way through the *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein. We read Bridgeman and, from time to time, would descend to his basement laboratory to discuss something with him.

As a Viennese, Philipp loved the ambiance of the coffeehouses. The closest approximation to them in Cambridge was the Hays-Bickford cafeteria, where many of our discussions took place. One evening I recall telephoning Philipp at home and being answered by his wife Hania, who I believe had been his student in Prague. (She would often say that Philipp "knew a great deal for a physicist.") In her monumental accent she said, "We are here singing English folksongs; Philipp has gone away." I had no trouble locating him at the Hays-Bickford.

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In later years, when I was working full time in physics, I would visit the Franks at their home. Once, on a roasting summer day, I went there with my parents. Hania was dressed in a wool shawl and, after offering up a spectrum of benign liquids of various colors, she drank something that looked naively like water. She announced, "I drink slivovitz to keep me warm."

In 1954 Philipp retired from Harvard, and I helped him clean out his office. It was an unbelievable chaos. He had, as I remember, a rolltop desk, and from it he extracted letters, some of which he had never opened and which dated from the 1930s. He opened a few and observed, "You see, they were not so important anyway." He also had a treasure of letters from Einstein, Schrödinger, and other notable physicists. Somehow this collection disappeared after his death. He read me a number of Einstein's letters, and from them I learned that Einstein could be exceedingly sharp and severe in his criticism of work he did not like. This also came as a revelation, since I had the naive idea that Einstein was a saint. I once asked Philipp whether the young Einstein, with whom he had contact as early as 1907, would have appeared to be bright. He laughed, but he knew what I meant, since some very great physicists like Bohr are not so much "bright" as incredibly deep. He told me that the young Einstein was very bright and much given to what Philipp referred to as "cracks"—instantaneous jokes. From out of the innards of the desk he pulled a dusty, rolled-up piece of drawing paper on which there was an etching of Einstein done in 1931. It was signed by the artist and by Einstein. Philipp gave it to me and it hangs in my living room.

I saw Philipp for the last time a year or so before his death. Gerald Holton, who had been a colleague and close friend of the Franks over this entire time, had told me that the Franks had reached a stage in their lives where they would be much better off in a home, a place where they would have help in caring for their needs. He told me that he had found a desirable place, and we went together to the Franks to tell them about it. I recall that Philipp said he was surprised to "somehow have lived to more than eighty years." He also said that when he read things he had written long ago they no longer seemed to have been written by him, but by someone else. He seemed to view old age and death with the same clear-eyed objectivity with which he had viewed life. The memory of that visit haunts me still.

Someone once remarked that the difficulty in writing about teachers is that the life of a teacher, *as* a teacher, is written on water. How can one re-create, even for oneself, the ambiance of a classroom? I was eighteen when I first attended Professor Frank's course. I am fifty as I write this. In my mind I think that I can trace a continuous thread that leads from here back to there. But in writing about these three great teachers I also recall how unclear the future seemed to me then.

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Books

The Nature of Nurture

JOSEPH ADELSON

CYRIL BURT, PSYCHOLOGIST. *By L. S. Hearnshaw. Cornell University Press. $18.50.*
ESSAYS AND DATA ON AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS. *Edited by Thomas Sowell, with the assistance of Lynn D. Collins. The Urban Institute. $15.*
COUNTING BY RACE. *By Terry Eastland and William J. Bennett. Basic Books. $10.95.*

Some groups enjoy more worldly success than others. Children from middle-class families generally do better in school than do blue-collar youngsters, and ultimately receive more education, get better jobs, and earn more money. That is true in this country, in Western Europe, in Japan; it seems to be equally true in the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. Even where government policy sets out to undo or reverse the pattern, the reforms fail, or peter out, or are overturned. In the long run, white-collar, professional, and managerial families provide the next generation's technical and economic leadership. That is, on the average. Bear in mind that in all advanced societies there is a good deal of social and economic mobility, and in both directions. Many children from poor families rise, and many from well-to-do families fall.

The relation of social class to economic success is only one part of a far larger domain: differences associated with color, language, religion, caste, heritage in general and in particular, and especially when the group in question is in the minority. In this country, as is well known, the Jews and Orientals are among the most successful of all groups in terms of education and income; most blacks and Hispanics fare poorly. What is not so widely known is the extent of differences within the various groups. Among blacks, those of West Indian origin show high rates of achievement. Among the Spanish-speaking people, Cubans have become relatively affluent in a fairly short time. One can multiply examples endlessly. In all countries having some visible degree of ethnic heterogeneity, one is liable to find differences in occupation, education, income, and the like—and when these are significant, they are likely to be the source of social tension. When a minority group is more successful than most—the Ibo in Nigeria, the East Indians in Uganda, the Chinese in Vietnam—they may become the targets of envy, and ultimately of political reprisal. Conversely, when a minority group is less successful than others, it is likely to suffer a pariah status within the larger community.

The three books before us could not be more dissimilar in genre: one is a biography, the second a collection of articles in history and economics, the third a study in legal and political philosophy. What they have in common is that they tell us about the origins and effects of differences among groups. What accounts for variations in economic achievement? What role does discrimination play? Once established, does a certain group tend to retain its position, or is there a natural history of rise and decline? Should the state intervene to help groups which lag behind and, if so, how?

The biography has as its subject Sir Cyril Burt, and it is worth noting that I almost wrote "the notorious Sir Cyril Burt." During most of his lifetime Burt was generally ranked

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as Britain's most eminent psychologist—a man heaped, indeed festooned, with honors. He was, for example, the first British psychologist to be knighted. He was a man of the highest distinction, and his honors were deserved. Yet his current claim on our attention has little to do with his achievements; rather it has to do with the by now widely accepted knowledge that Burt, at the end of his life, published several papers in which he falsified or invented some crucial findings. Under most circumstances this might well have gone unnoticed—or, if noticed, unremarked—since the social sciences are inherently so ragged methodologically that the literature is filled with anomalous or discordant data. In this case, however, the findings were on the question of the heritability of intelligence, the most bitterly disputed topic in psychology today. Furthermore the studies in question involve a central aspect of that controversy: the similarity in I.Q. of identical twins reared apart from each other. That is a very rare category, as you might imagine, and Burt—who was extremely well connected—was thought to have been able to collect a large number of such cases. He reported a high degree of similarity, and his findings were of considerable value to the hereditarian position to which he was a key contributor.

In the course of time, after Burt's death, doubts were felt about the validity of his findings and, interestingly enough, were expressed by partisans on both sides—by Professor Leon J. Kamin of Princeton, a determined environmentalist, and by Arthur R. Jensen. Jensen argued that Burt's errors were not of probity but of carelessness. It certainly did seem so; at the time of publication, Burt was old, sick, and given to memory lapses. Most persuasively, the errors were so blatant, once perceived, that they hardly seemed deliberate. A high school student would have done a better job of faking, and Burt was a master psychometrician. That was where matters stood until it was discovered that the two co-authors Burt had listed in the disputed publications—the Misses Howard and Conway—could not be found, and presumably did not exist. From that point on, the tide turned: the Burt case received wide-spread publicity, and the environmentalists pursued, and achieved, a propaganda victory.

I put it that way because it appears to me that the following impressions have been given, especially in the writing directed to the general public: first, that the Burt scandal did irreparable damage to the hereditarian view of intelligence; second, that the case was a blow to "Jensenism," the implication being that Burt was racist; third, that Burt acted out of political motives, to rescue a failing ideological position. None of these is true. The Burt debacle embarrassed the hereditarians but did not harm their position to any significant degree. The hereditarian case rests upon a vast quantity of other research (I hasten to say that the environmentalist case is equally well supported). It is fatuous to imagine that opinion on so vital an issue would depend upon a single study. Even on the very narrow question of identical twins reared apart, Burt's is only one of four studies in the literature—all of which support the notion of a strong genetic component in intelligence. For that matter, a recent issue of *Science* (March 21, 1980), which offers a preliminary report of the massive studies now being done in Minnesota, carries the information that "I.Q. seems to have a high degree of heritability, as indicated by the fact that of all the tests administered to identical twins separately reared, I.Q. shows the highest concordance."

As to Burt's ostensible racism—never quite charged, but hinted at through a conflation of Burt's views on social class with Jensen's writings on black intelligence—there is simply nothing to it. To the contrary, Burt doubted whether the European "races" were superior to what were then called the "savage" races. Within the "European races" he could discern few differences save that "there might perhaps be a certain intellectual superiority among Jews." (Some racist!) As to whether Burt acted out of political motives, that is impossible to say, though it seems unlikely (as I will argue later). For the moment it is worth pointing out that he was very nearly apolitical and that his sentiments—so far as one could discern them in someone who almost never wrote or talked about politics—were ingenuously liberal, or liberal enough so that one of his closest students considered him to be, on the whole, left of center.

Once we depoliticize the Burt case, we confront the most puzzling of conundrums, for we realize that there was no rational rea-

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"One of the greatest documentary contributions ever made to English history." –A.G. Dickens, *former Director of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London*

The Lisle Letters

Edited by Muriel St. Clare Byrne

The Lisle Letters consist of the personal, official, and business correspondence of the household of Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, the illegitimate but acknowledged son of Edward IV, during the years 1533 to 1540 when he was Lord Deputy of Calais. These seven critical years in English history were marked by the rise, ascendancy, and fall of Thomas Cromwell and the letters reflect the mixture of passion, terror, and politics that was the court of Henry VIII. They also present the everyday concerns of the Lisle household. No other source provides such an abundance of detail about daily life – marriage, child-rearing, education, clothing, food, and furnishing. The Lisle Letters are the Tudor world in microcosm.

Detail from PROCESSION OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE GARTER (Lord Lisle is seventh from the left.)
From J. Anstis, *The Register of the Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 1724.
Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago

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The Lisle Letters

From Muriel St. Clare Byrne's Introduction:

"... if you are going to understand English literature, at some time you must take the seisin of the England out of which it has grown, in which it is rooted. You must fall to your knees and rise clutching the earth in your hand, as legend says William the Conqueror did when he landed. You must seize upon the speech, the character, the way of life, the experience of whatever century is your personal starting point, catch the quality, temper, and color of its modes of thought and feeling. . . . My starting point was the Tudor century, so that it was only a matter of time before I encountered the Lisle Letters. Here is the very earth – not the background, but the soil itself. In this great national collection I had found what I wanted – the lost moment that was Tudor England."

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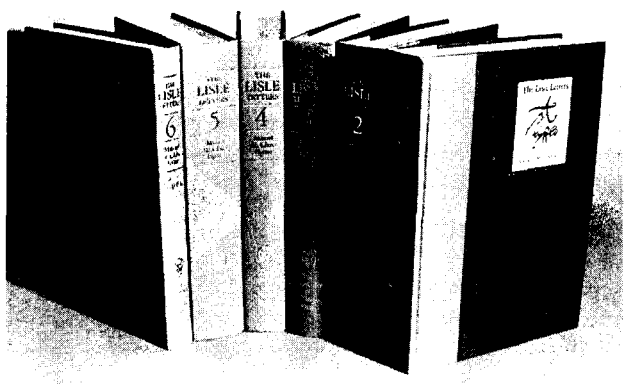

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son for Burt to have falsified his data. His "evidence" on identicals reared apart was nothing new, but simply a stronger example of what was already in the literature. On the discovery of scientific fraud the penalties are so severe—shame, obloquy, and exile—that they are never risked except by those who feel they have everything to gain in playing for the highest stakes. All the cases that come to mind involve some desperate bid to gain the scientific limelight, and Burt, as we have seen, could not have been more in the limelight. The only plausible way to understand Burt's behavior is to posit an irrational personality. And as we make our way through Hearnshaw's fascinating account, we gradually become aware that we are reading an *uncovering* biography—much along the lines of Trevor-Roper's *Hermit of Peking*—where we discover beneath the public figure another personality, a rogue, and in this instance not a lovable rogue but someone malevolent and deceptive.

One of his former students described Burt as a "polymath of Renaissance dimensions." That is true. He was not only a brilliant psychologist; he was also a man of breathtaking erudition in a large number of fields. A great many students and colleagues have commented on his generosity in offering time and expert counsel. All these virtues and gifts—his generosity, his erudition, his remarkable talents as a writer and speaker—must be set alongside character defects of a most extraordinary kind. He was also a monster of vanity, unable to bear criticism, obsessed about protecting and indeed extending his celebrity, mean and vindictive when crossed, devious and unscrupulous in opposition. This exemplary book is rhetorically understated, *à l'anglaise*; yet one can sense Hearnshaw's astonishment and perturbation as he watches the official biography he was commissioned to do by the Burt family turn into an exposé by the sheer force of the evidence. We learn that the papers on twins were not the only instances where Burt invented data. He also did so in the course of a controversy involving a presumed decline of the level of British intelligence, and he most likely did the same in an article reporting parent-offspring correlations in intelligence. We also learn that the Misses Conway and Howard were not the only authors he invented. He made it a practice to publish letters and reviews under different pseudonyms, often for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Some of his professional behavior, as an editor and as department chairman, was flagrantly dishonest. Perhaps the most scandalous set of events in Burt's career has received almost no general attention: his attempts, using the most underhanded means, to rewrite the history of statistical psychology by undermining Charles Spearman's position as the inventor of factor analysis and substituting his own, spurious, claims. Here Burt stopped at nothing—rumor and innuendo, altering papers submitted to him as an editor, providing false accounts in his own writings. In each of these instances, as in others, Burt seems to have been driven by some real or imagined threat to his ego, by the fear of losing control, authority, prestige. Burt fabricated the twins data because his hereditarian views had been challenged, and he came to believe—erroneously—that his reputation was in danger. The article was a coup de theatre meant to be a coup de grace; and one comes away feeling that if Burt had been an environmentalist attacked for those views, he would very likely have done the same—that is, fabricate findings.

Hearnshaw sees Burt's aberrancy as developing late in life, in response to a confluence of troubling and traumatic events. He married, at the age of forty-nine, a woman of markedly different temperament and interests, and they were soon estranged. His lifelong accumulation of research data was destroyed during the Blitz. He developed Ménière's disease. After he retired as department chairman, he could not control the appointment of his successor. He lost control of the statistical journal he had edited in so proprietary a fashion. He saw the government move away from the system of selective secondary education, based on intelligence testing, that he had done so much to promote. And so on—many of these the common problems of aging: decline of powers, loss of status. But Burt responded to such setbacks by the development, or the accentuation, of paranoid traits. That is Hearnshaw's conclusion, and I believe it is about right. We generally think of paranoia in its extreme versions, involving delusional systems. But it is far more commonly found in less acute forms, showing itself in such characteristics as (quot-

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THE CREATION OF NIKOLAI GOGOL. *Donald Fanger. Harvard University Press. $16.50.*

Citation: "In the title of Donald Fanger's *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* the word 'creation' applies, not so much to the remarkable corpus of drama and fiction which Gogol did produce, as to the process by which Gogol became, eventually, the writer he was in his prime. Professor Fanger's book is not simply a learned analysis of texts. Its solid, extensive, insightful information about what Gogol wrote merely serves to support and enrich the book's larger purpose, which is the pilgrim's progress of an artist in the development of his art. Gogol—an inheritor and initiator—became the magnificent bridge leading from Pushkin into what may well be called the golden age of Russian literature, which produced Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Professor Fanger's previous voluminous publication and editing in his field, as well as his study of Russian and comparative literature, and the special care he has taken for this particular book in the inspection of both Gogol's published literary output and Gogol's correspondence all are integral to *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, an outstanding contribution in the realm of literary scholarship and criticism."

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

UTOPIAN THOUGHT IN THE WESTERN WORLD. *Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel. Harvard University Press. $25.*

Citation: "This is a truly remarkable book, the product of vast scholarship and learned sensitivity. Although it is written with grace and wit, it is the subject matter—what the Manuels call the 'utopian propensity'—that will entrance the reader. Eschewing rigid definitions of utopia and avoiding both the derivative and the bizarre, the Manuels discuss those thinkers who provide a vision of a better world—unattainable perhaps, but recognizable, potentially real, and, for some at least, worth striving for. The Manuels carefully trace the evolution of utopian thought from the Renaissance to its 'twilight' in the twentieth century. The uniqueness of each individual utopian thinker as well as the relations of each to his predecessors and to the society in which he lived are lucidly and convincingly presented. The Manuels have splendidly executed a worthy theme, providing their readers with outstanding historical scholarship and a chorus of voices that speak eloquently to the human condition."

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THE IMAGE OF ETERNITY: ROOTS OF TIME IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD. *David Park. The University of Massachusetts Press. $14.50.*

Citation: "David Park's book is a remarkable achievement. He begins his preface: 'Time is reckoned a tricky subject, elusive precisely because its nature is to elude.' It takes a scientist with Park's talents—precisely because it is his nature to understand and to explain—to capture some aspects of the tricky eluder and to make them fit plausibly into various frameworks in his readers' minds and experiences. He delves deeply into physics, confronting difficult questions of simultaneity, relativity, irreversibility of some processes, entropy and Maxwell's demon; he traces conflicting philosophical notions of time from antiquity to the present; and he juxtaposes psychological and logical attacks on this subtle concept, making us aware of the limitations of each. Throughout this comprehensive, many-faceted discussion he emphasizes the ingenuity of the human mind in building abstract mental constructs, such as space-time, to tame the tricky eluder; yet he keeps the human brain, made up of the molecules that form all matter, in perspective as part of an enormous universe. His engaging style and excellent choice of models made this reader suspect that all the difficult technical matters had been relegated to the appendices, but each short appendix is an elaboration, in the same charming style, of a point touched in the text. It takes a master craftsman to make his work look easy, and *The Image of Eternity* is proof of this pudding."

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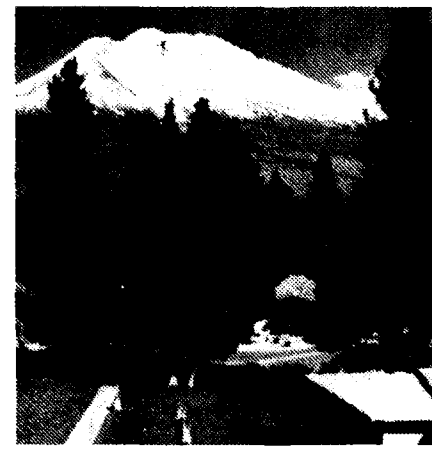

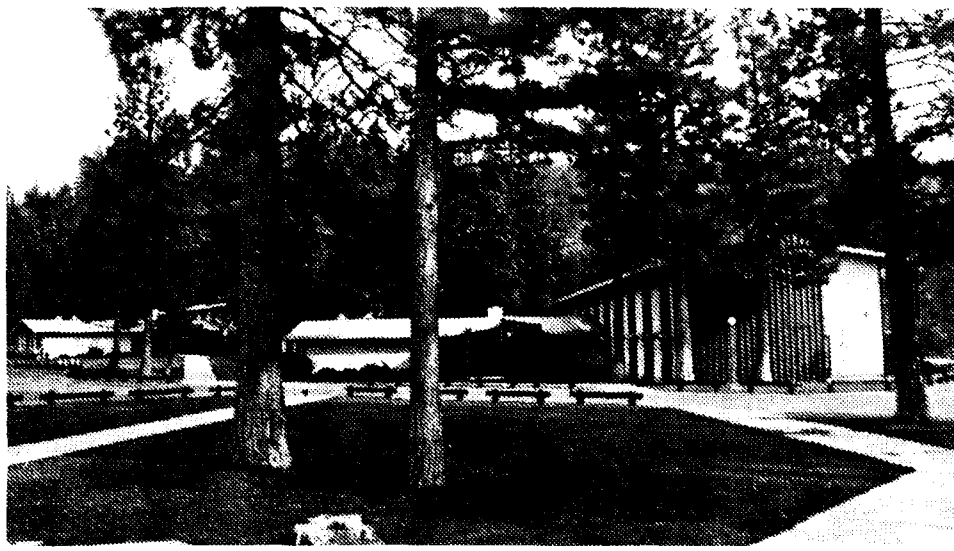

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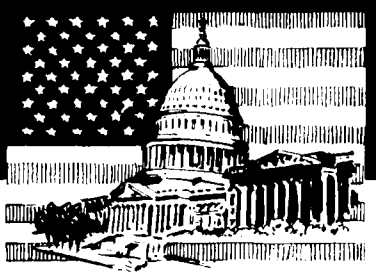

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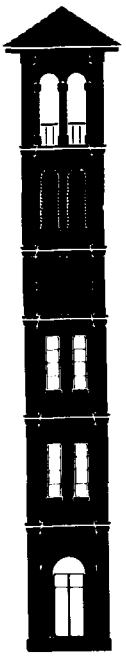

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ing Hearnshaw) "self-aggrandizement and inflated egocentricity, over-sensitiveness and suspiciousness, querulousness, secretiveness, compulsive drive . . . and hypochondria." Sad to say, that more or less sums up the Burt personality in the last thirty years of his life.

If ever you doubted that pride goeth before a fall, this is the book for you. It is hard to imagine a man more dominated by the sin of pride, or more defeated by it. That pride was most visible in the defense of the self, but it also showed itself in a way we may be inclined to overlook. Burt was a leading figure in that first generation of social scientists who believed that they had the means and the wisdom to form social policy; in his case the means was intelligence testing, and the policy that of selective secondary education, wherein children are sorted into different schools depending upon ability. Within limits there are arguments to be made for that policy, but Burt's hubris in his later years kept him from recognizing those limits. In his zeal to have an influence upon events, he was led to inflate the scope, significance, and strength of the scientific knowledge available. Although Burt, born in 1883, is in most ways an antediluvian figure, in that one respect—in the willful use of inadequate evidence—he is eerily contemporary, the very model of the modern social engineer.

Leaving aside Burt's defects of character, his most conspicuous limitation was an insensitivity, a sort of tone deafness, to the part played by social and historical forces in influencing intelligence and achievement. He assumed that intelligence was essentially biological in nature, and was the major determinant of achievement. If Group X was successful, it was because they were able; he would have found it hard to grasp the opposite hypothesis, that they were able because they were successful and that I.Q. may be an expression of achievement as well as one of its sources. In particular, the genetic model he adhered to finds it hard to explain why a group's measured intellectual ability would change over a period of time, why Group X would score, say, around an I.Q. of 90 in 1910 and of 110 in 1960.

These increases in group intelligence—and, more important, in economic achievement—are considered in an excellent collection of essays on American ethnic groups, edited by Thomas Sowell. An essay written by Sowell shows us that most immigrant groups score well below "normal" in their early years of residence in this country, low enough indeed to be considered marginally retarded. In 1921, Italian-Americans scored from I.Q. 77.5 to 85 in five different studies. Almost exactly that level was found, in the same era, for Slovaks, Greeks, Poles, Spanish, and Portuguese. Eighty-three percent of the immigrant Jews of that period were rated "feebleminded." At the present time, all these groups score at or above the national average. It is especially interesting to note that the current difference in black-white I.Q. score, about 15 points, is just about the same as between immigrant and native American groups in the past, and Sowell marshals his evidence brilliantly to show that American blacks—in both level and pattern of measured intelligence—score just as other disadvantaged groups did in prior decades.

But the major emphasis of this collection is not upon the measured intelligence of ethnic groups, but on their economic mobility and on the processes that inhibit or advance it. It is fairly clear that all the groups discussed—blacks, Orientals, Irish, Italians, Jews, and others—have risen socially and economically over time, although (as the preface notes) "not necessarily at the same time, with the same intensity, or in exactly the same way." Yet that is only the starting point. The effort here is to explore, as carefully as the (limited) data will allow, how the general pattern has worked itself out in specific instances and to examine, as closely as possible, differences not only between groups but within them.

The lead essay, again by Sowell, provides a splendid example. Entitled "Three Black Histories," it provides a comparative historical account of three groups within the larger black community: the black majority, who are descendants of emancipated slaves; those who are descendants of slaves freed before Emancipation; and the West Indians. The second and third of these, though a distinct minority of the total black population, provide a commanding share of the entrepreneurial and professional leadership. Those of West Indian origin, who are only about 1 percent of the total, are nevertheless conspicuous in the black elite. Perhaps more to the point,

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the West Indians as a group show higher earnings, greater representation in the professions, lower indices of social pathology (such as crime), and lower birthrates. Even more striking is that these advantages persist and, in fact, increase among second-generation West Indian immigrants. In the New York City area, they exceed in socioeconomic status both native blacks *and* the U.S. population as a whole—specifically in income, education, and proportion in the professions. Obviously a "biological" theory of lower black achievement is gainsaid by these data, since, as Sowell says, "West Indians have a higher proportion of African ancestry than do American Negroes." Nor can we say that the West Indians are simply profiting from a distinctive accent, or better education received under the British system; the second, American-born generation does even better than the first. How, then, do we understand West Indian success? Sowell seeks the answer, persuasively, in comparative economic history, contrasting the "regimented dependence," which was the lot of most American blacks, with the West Indian exposure to economic incentives and the market system.

The vicissitudes of history, economic and political, are also shown to play a singular role in helping us understand the striking economic success of Oriental-Americans. It is now generally known that the Chinese and Japanese are among the most accomplished American groups, ethnic or otherwise, and this despite a horrendous history of discrimination which included, for the Japanese, a wartime period spent in relocation camps. William Petersen's fine essay is too detailed to permit summary here, but it shows us how very complex the problem is, how the sources of achievement cannot be reduced to one or another variable. Petersen shows that the specific history of a group can condition its economic development—his most startling observation here being that the economic success of the Japanese may well have been *aided* by their relocation during the Second World War. The "occupational traps of young, second-generation Japanese working at Los Angeles vegetable stands, the often unreasonable control that patriarchs of the first generation exerted on their families, their restricted life in Little Tokyo"—these essentially inhibiting elements of prewar Japanese-American life were reduced or eliminated. Some support for this "extraordinary thesis" —as Petersen himself terms it—is offered by the fact that the Hawaiian Japanese, who were not placed in camps, have not shown as high a rate of upward mobility as the mainland Japanese, who were.

The several historical essays in the Sowell collection are interesting not only as history, but also for what they suggest about social policy designed to aid disadvantaged groups. To begin with, it is fairly clear that to understand the economic history of a group, one cannot rely on any single-factor theory; it is a function of many interacting attributes and circumstances: its demographic mix, its degree of urbanization, its values and skills, its patterns of mutual support, its family structure, along with its place in the total economy. That may seem a truism, but if so it is a truism generally ignored. Social policy has tended toward dramatic and massive measures which are often merely cosmetic and which are much of the time irrelevant or counterproductive. It has so tended in part because it is governed by what Robert Merton once termed "the imperiousness of immediate interest"—that is, by a sense of urgency which cannot look beyond the desired remedy for a present evil to perceive the indirect and unexpected outcomes of policy. Although Sowell does not develop these points in this book, he has done so elsewhere. It is his argument, here simplified, that blacks do not so much suffer from current discrimination as from the residues of past discrimination—in particular their having been prevented, because of slavery and Jim Crow, from developing an entrepreneurial tradition and the skills and outlooks associated with it. He is nevertheless optimistic about the economic evolution of blacks in America, and concludes his chapter on the three black histories by writing that "over the decades the socio-economic rise of black Americans has been consistent and has finally accelerated to a level approaching that of others with far more initial advantages."

Sowell's optimism about the capacity of blacks to help themselves and his stress on the evolutionary processes of the economy is not widely shared by the governing elites of our country or by its black leadership in general. These groups adhere to a theory of black ex-

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ceptionalism, which holds that blacks are not one group among others, but are a caste, victims of an entrenched racism and doomed, in the absence of radical government intervention, to a continuing penury. That judgment has resulted in the establishment of a system of racial quotas, wherein designated minorities are to be guaranteed a certain percentage of jobs, placement in schools, federal contracts, and so on.

That system, though set up, is not yet fully implemented; yet it is already evident that its indirect and unwanted effects will be more powerful and socially damaging than what it can or will achieve in a positive way. From the first, the policy of racial preferences has had almost no popular support. It is felt to be imposed rather than chosen, and for that reason is ignored or subverted when circumstances allow, or else accepted resentfully. It leads to hypocrisy among those in high places, and cynicism among the rest of us. The policy is seen as unworkable, except at excessive economic cost. It requires the support of a large, expensive, and unproductive bureaucracy. These are the practical objections; equally important is that so many feel that it is offensive morally. It seems to violate a cherished set of beliefs about just deserts—that a citizen is to be judged and rewarded on the basis of effort, merit, and achievement and not on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Counting by Race is the best book we have had on the *Bakke* and *Weber* cases, precisely because it articulates so forcefully the sources of our moral apprehensions about racial quotas. Terry Eastland and William J. Bennett argue that commentary on these cases has been diverted into peripheral, somewhat legalistic issues, such as the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, at the cost of overlooking the central question: the idea of moral equality. The term "equality" has been so eroded by overuse and corrupted by cant that when we hear it we are likely either to nod sappily or to fall fast asleep. The authors are eager to revive the term for us, to establish its provenance, to restore its significance as one of the governing ideas of the American democracy. They use the term "moral equality" to distinguish it sharply from other current usages, specifically "numerical equality." In their view, *Bakke* is "supremely a case about a conflict between the idea of numerical equality and that of moral equality." Much of the book is devoted to tracing for us the vicissitudes of that concept through the course of our history. It makes its earliest appearance at the very beginning of the Republic, particularly in the writings of Thomas Jefferson. Though Jefferson recognized the intellectual and physical differences among men, "what made man uniquely man, he also believed, was his possession of a moral sense, which makes man accountable to himself and others, capable, therefore, of self-government and of consenting to social obligation." That distinctive use of the term "equality" was to be later taken up and extended by Abraham Lincoln during his debates with Douglas. That blacks might be inferior to whites at a given moment was beside the point to Lincoln; American whites were also "inferior in certain respects to other peoples elsewhere." In Lincoln's view—and here Eastland and Bennett draw upon the work of Harry Jaffa and Hadley Arkes—"the principle of equality was logically necessary to the idea of self-government," which requires "the assumption that all men possess free will, that all men are morally autonomous, capable of choosing right and wrong."

Seen in this light, the damage threatened to Allan Bakke and done to Brian Weber was not a matter of losing out in an economic competition; it was that they were deprived of some measure of moral worth—above all, the right to be judged as an individual, equally with others. And seen in that same light, those advantaged by racial preferences are equally, though less visibly, damaged. To achieve preferment which is granted rather than earned, and granted de haut en bas—under those circumstances one is diminished, deprived of moral worth and thus of moral equality. In his turn, the granter patronizes, and ultimately despises, the recipient. Not too long ago I heard the head of a large foundation—a fervent public proponent of racial preferences—argue privately that these are necessary because blacks are too incompetent to make it on their own. I would ordinarily not make too much of that statement, which was spoken in the course of a heated and finally hateful quarrel over affirmative action. But one so frequently hears similar judgments made by fellow academics, most of them lib-

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erals, as to infer that this is now a conventional underground conviction: that *they* are not *our* equals.

The penultimate chapter of *Counting by Race* carries a haunting title: "Create in Him a Habit of Dependence." The phrase is taken from the comments of a cotton planter on how to train a slave, and the entire passage is worth quoting: "What is essentially necessary for his happiness you must provide for him Yourself and by that means create in him a habit of perfect dependence on you—Allow it once to be understood by a negro that he is able to provide for himself and you that moment give him an undeniable claim to you for a portion of his time to make for this provision." It was the perverse psychological genius of the slave master to understand the demoralizing effect upon the recipient of a benevolence that inculcates dependency. Here one is reminded forcefully of Thomas Sowell's observation that most American blacks still must struggle against the legacy of "regimented dependence."

How to break the habit of dependence? One argument in favor of racial preference systems is that they will accelerate the learning of independence—that is, those habits of achievement, risk taking, self-denial, self-discipline, and the like which are involved in a securely entrenched work ethic. That may be so—one prays that it will be so—but we ought to recognize that racial quotas are also a likely way to create another habit of perfect dependence, this time upon the state.

Cultivated Gardeners

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA: POLITICS AND CULTURE. *By Carl Schorske. Knopf. $15.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM M. JOHNSTON

The acclaim that has greeted Carl Schorske's book pays homage above all to its subject. After a decade of growing attention in America, turn-of-the-century Vienna has at last come into its own, perhaps because for the first time Americans feel at home with connoisseurs of cultural decline. As we strip away our long-held illusions, we hark back to Viennese masters who practiced a similar unmasking with unprecedented determination. After more than a generation of spurious historicism, Vienna between 1890 and 1914 produced a cohort of thinkers who specialized in stripping away false facades to expose enduring structures behind them. Freud, Schönberg, Loos, and later Wittgenstein did something more, however, than denounce sham. Amid general decay, they envisioned abiding structures that promised to lay new foundations of self-understanding, and expected these structures, whether of art or of the psyche, to outlast the flux of styles that had concealed them. They cherished the hope that at last the bedrock of artistic and psychic experience had been struck. They had unearthed, they believed, the secrets of the ages, the very foundations of cultural experience. Doggedly they clung to their discoveries as to a rock of stability amid shifting alternatives. What assures these thinkers a growing public, in fact, is their capacity to articulate structures that lie deeper and firmer than the stage drops that totter above them. As idols crumble, they show how to fashion one's own Gibraltar.

In a series of four articles published between 1961 and 1973, Carl Schorske established himself as America's leading essayist on this cultural flowering. His book has been long awaited, and its appearance could not have been more timely. Slightly more than half of this book is new material carefully integrated with the four previously published pieces. The illustrations greatly enhance the whole. But while the essays on painters exceed all expectations, other parts are so selective as to raise serious doubts about the method pursued. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* is not quite the seminal work that some have taken it to be.

Schorske's central question is: How did the flowering of Viennese culture between 1890 and 1914 reflect, and then gradually alter, the values of the upper and middle class which sired its innovators and patronized their creations? Schorske focuses on six groups of cultural leaders: literati such as Arthur Schnitz-

WILLIAM M. JOHNSTON is professor of history at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He is author of *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938*, and his *The Golden Age of Vienna, 1815–1914* will be published in 1981.

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ler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (but not Karl Kraus); architects and city planners such as Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner (but not Adolf Loos); innovators in mass politics such as Karl Lueger, Theodor Herzl, and Georg von Schönerer (but not the Austro-Marxist Viktor Adler); painters such as Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka (but not Egon Schiele); musicians such as Arnold Schönberg (but not Anton Bruckner, Hugo Wolf, or Gustav Mahler); and of course Freud. The omissions are significant. Schorske has written exclusively on figures that move him to eloquence and insight, often of inevitable rightness. But he has not grappled with others who are no less deserving of his pains. He states no criterion by which Bruckner and Schiele are ignored, Kraus and Mahler scarcely touched upon, and Adolf Loos discussed only in relation to Kokoschka's masterful portrait. (Wittgenstein is rightly omitted because he belongs to the post-1914 period.) Intellectual historians are known by the range of their comparisons, by the juxtapositions they favor and the affinities they celebrate. Schorske has chosen narrowly and unsystematically, eschewing all obligation to justify his omissions, and thus these essays reflect a personal taste rather than a rigorous scholarly ethos. To his credit, Schorske does not disguise this fact. The absence of a bibliography, combined with failure to cite rival interpretations, confirms that here is a collection of essays—not a treatise or a handbook, but a record of personal wrestling with a dozen major figures from turn-of-the-century Vienna. A different dozen could have inspired equal success.

It seems churlish, therefore, to dwell upon omissions. The weightiest omission, however, cannot be ignored: Schorske utterly fails to describe Austrian culture before 1860. A few paragraphs about the aristocratic culture of grace hardly suffice to paint the picture of pre-1860 Vienna. The book gives the erroneous impression that aestheticism triumphed only after 1880. The truth is just the opposite. Since at least the seventeenth century, the Viennese have shown a marked preference for art over politics. Nearly all the Hapsburg emperors through the early nineteenth century were amateur musicians of high competence. Maria Theresa was honored above all for having founded the court opera and the court theater rather than for having begun to centralize the administration. Nineteenth-century Austrian culture emerged from under the curse of censorship. Between the 1780s and 1848 all printed matter had to pass the censors before publication. Spies haunted public places, and civil servants lived in dread of having an offhand remark overheard. Moreover, the two generations before 1860 had been deprived of all opportunity for political participation. They resorted to music making, historical compiling, amateur painting, and dabbling in philology to escape the ubiquitous censors and police spies. The liberal decades from 1860 to 1880 marked a hiatus, breathtakingly short-lived, between two periods of middle-class retreat from politics. The vaunted withdrawal of bourgeois youth from politics after 1880 did not require a new strategy; the sons of frustrated liberals simply refined the paths of aestheticism that had consoled their grandparents. The Oedipal revolt hailed by Schorske differed only in degree, not in kind, from earlier flights into art. His protagonists were more inventive than their great-grandparents, but hardly more beleaguered.

The leaders of Viennese culture after 1880 enlarged and reassessed pursuits that had fascinated Austrians since 1800. That is a major reason why the innovators around 1900 could achieve such astonishing depth. Klimt, Schiele, and Kokoschka revolutionized a century of bourgeois portraiture; Sitte, Wagner, and Loos had to surpass distinguished pre-1848 architects; Mahler, Wolf, and Schönberg provided a living link, via Brahms and Bruckner, with the age of Beethoven and Schubert. Most important, Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and many lesser lights stood as successors of the dramatist Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872). Austrian fiction grew out of his novella *The Poor Minstrel* (1847) in much the same way that Russian fiction evolved out of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Every educated Austrian had seen Grillparzer's plays, some of which dramatize Hapsburg court intrigue in a way reminiscent of Shakespeare's history plays. Even today most Austrians esteem Grillparzer as their most representative writer. He excelled at expounding self-doubt, at preaching political resignation, and at lamenting public indifference to his work. To write on Viennese culture around 1900 without once mentioning Grillparzer is like writing on

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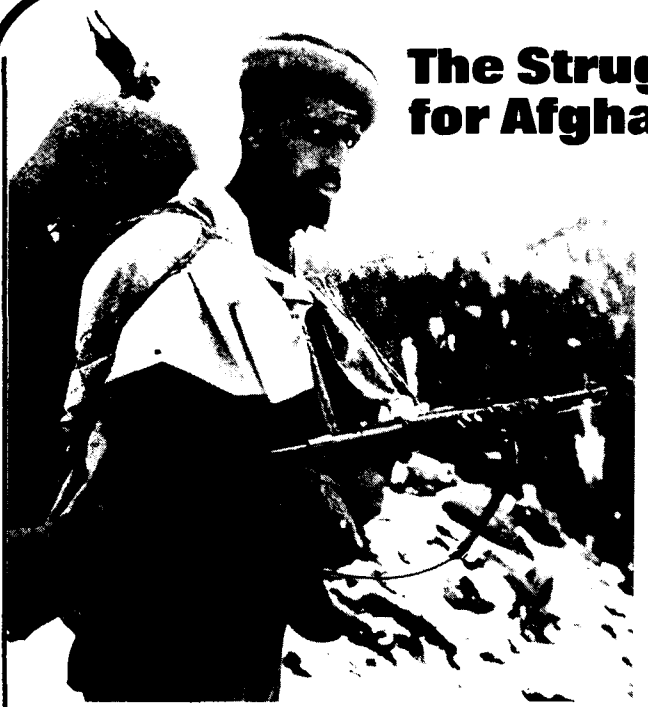

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Paris in 1900 without discussing Victor Hugo, or on Boston in 1900 without recalling Emerson. Such culture heroes haunt every intellectual, and to omit them foreshortens historical perspective and subverts the task of the cultural historian. Schorske imputes to the Viennese his own sense that after Nietzsche everything fell apart. They would not agree. No urban culture has worked harder to celebrate its past than has the Viennese. Schorske writes as though the high points of that past had never existed.

But this is a book of essays, not a treatise. As essays full of polished phrases, rare facts, and choice insights, some of them deserve high praise. The finest are two new ones on Klimt and Kokoschka. So delicate is Schorske's perception, so subtle his wording, so masterful his narrative that one wonders whether he is not at heart an art historian. No one has written more penetratingly on Klimt's evolution or Kokoschka's beginnings. One wishes he had done the same for Schiele. The essay on Schönerer, Lueger, and Herzl as virtuosos of "Politics in a New Key" retains the originality it displayed when first published in 1967. The 130-odd footnotes, however, cite no work published after 1963 except one by Schorske's student, William J. McGrath. The article is stimulating, but up-to-date it is not. In the book as a whole, 500 footnotes mention only 20 works published after 1970. All but two or three of these concern music or the fine arts. One would never guess from Schorske's book that the 1970s unloosed a torrent of publications about Austrian culture.

The fiction of Stifter, Saar, and Hofmannsthal is expounded in order to articulate the garden as a key metaphor of Austrian culture. Schorske is to be credited with having shown the aptness of this metaphor as early as 1967. His whole book could be titled "Culture in a Garden." Yet that metaphor underlines the importance of the pre-1848 period that he has chosen to ignore. It was then that Austrians became addicted to cultivating their gardens as a refuge from censorship. After that they never gave it up. By 1900 some of them had begun to cultivate hothouse plants as well. Schorske is at his best interpreting some of those exotic growths like Klimt's and Kokoschka's paintings.

The essay on Freud probes a special case of what is known as the Schorske-thesis (stated here on pages 5–10, 116–119). Sons of the liberal generation of the 1860s and 1870s fled in despair from politics into art, science, and scholarship because the liberal bourgeoisie could not transplant their values to either the urban masses or the Slavic nationalities. This thesis is a powerful tool which has influenced nearly everyone working in modern Austrian studies. It applies with special force to writers like Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Stefan Zweig. It describes the world depicted in the fiction of Robert Musil and Heimito von Doderer. It pertains less cogently to Freud, however, if only because he had so many other preoccupations. To single out his frustrated political ambitions as a motif in *The Interpretation of Dreams* makes for an ingenious essay, but ingenious readings of Freud's self-analyses now abound and his dreams are the most overinterpreted of all time. Schorske lessens the impact of Freud's contribution by ignoring other cultural historians who have sifted this material. Scholars in North America like Peter Gay, Henri Ellenberger, and Paul Roazen are nowhere cited, not to mention French adepts like Marthe Robert, Jacques Lacan, and Paul Ricoeur. The masterful debate with secondary sources that Frank J. Sulloway conducts in *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* (1979) shows how much Schorske loses by neglecting rival interpretations. Sulloway, that most industrious of bibliographers, all but ignores Schorske's 1973 essay on Freud, presumably because Schorske's noncumulative concept of scholarship renders his contribution indistinct. Future scholars may well find Schorske only marginally useful because he does not counterpoint his theses against those of his colleagues. This book is delightful to read but difficult to use.

In sum, Schorske has written seven essays which display the charm of the Viennese feuilleton, happily unmarred by its superficiality or insouciance. These are deeply serious meditations on the origins of contemporary attitudes in the arts. Schorske shows in inimitable ways how pivotal turn-of-the-century Vienna was in shaping our self-understanding. He brings certain figures, notably Otto Wagner, Gustav Klimt, and the young Kokoschka into sharper focus than ever before. He offers provocative theses about a

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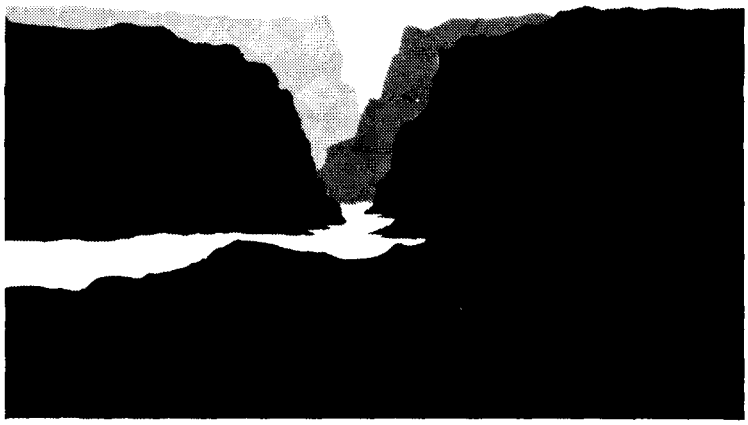
Joseph L. Sax

Mountains Without Handrails

Reflections on the National Parks



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number of other major figures. But he fails utterly to sketch the background of early nineteenth-century Austrian culture which made all of this possible. If Schorske's protagonists agreed on one thing, it was that the past weighed too heavily on Austrian culture. Freud, Schönberg, Loos, Schnitzler, and company strove to lift that burden, to look behind it, and to render it less oppressive. Schorske depicts their often heroic labors to acquire leverage for this task, but he does not describe what made the load so heavy or why they often chose inherited ground on which to plant their fulcrums. These successors of Archimedes owed far more to the Austrian past than they, or he, would admit.

Attuned to Art, Committed to Power

DIAGHILEV. *By Richard Buckle. Atheneum. $22.50.*

Reviewed by VERNON YOUNG

Among the omissions that impair culture histories of our century is the lack of attention paid to the art of the ballet, as if it were not as expressive a reflection of the age as literature or painting—or, for that matter, the movies. The fourth volume of Arnold Hauser's *The Social History of Art,* still unsurpassed in many respects, is a notable example. While dissipating his researches on "the rise of the operetta" and emphasizing, with a heavy hand, the phenomenon of the motion picture (principally the early Soviet Russian contribution), Hauser totally overlooked the extraordinary significance of ballet, in which—even as myths-in-advance and political actualities were prophesying the replacement of man by machinery—the physical principle in its quintessential glory had become the raison d'être. Hauser's oversight was the more revealing by reason of his assertion that "the film is the only art in which Soviet Russia has important achievements to its credit." Perhaps it did not jump with his thesis (tacitly Marxist) to acknowledge that Communist Russia had, in one direction at least, accepted an imperial tradition and sustained it. Nor was it to his purpose, one supposes, to celebrate a *Gesamtkunstwerk,* an art international and eclectic which owed as much to the reminiscence and myth of the European past as it soon did to the contemporary arts enlisted in its tentacular service: painting, music, theater, sculpture—even cinema, where life is reduced (if impurely) to figures in motion.

D. H. Lawrence *talked* the physical principle; the vulgar have satisfied their need of it in the mass world of organized athletics. Ballet, the Russian ballet foremost, restored the body beautiful to a commanding position in art for the first time, I think it can be said, since the days of classical Greece. "Life danced to music"—the simple, lovely definition is Arnold Haskell's. Which of the other arts in our day has offered a purer ideal for our salvation?

That the ballet had its golden age between, say, 1912 and 1929 is generally assumed. Although the development of modern dance is implicit in nineteenth-century sources (if you're a closely reading student of choreography), the masters of the ballet, as we are most familiar with it, were in their prime during the First World War years and in the decade following. The virtual origins of this art, like those of the movie, have been witnessed by us or our older contemporaries. There is no reason to doubt Arnold Haskell's assurance that Fokine's "five points," published in the London *Times* on July 16, 1914, "contain the whole history of the birth of modern ballet. They are the Magna Carta of the choreographer." Today, while ballet is a creation of international scope, the supreme dancers of recent years have been, as before, Russian: Ulanova, Makarova, Nureyev, Plisetskaya, Baryshnikov. And no American balletomane, however chauvinistic, needs to be reminded that George Balanchine (née Balanchinvadze and, incidentally, the first defector), the creator not only of ten ballets for Diaghilev but also of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* for Rodgers and Hart, was the godfather of classical ballet in the United States.

Diaghilev! The name is inescapable whenever the great continuity is evoked. No matter how unanimously Fokine, Massine, and Balanchine have agreed to relegate him artis-

VERNON YOUNG is the author of *Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos* and *On Film: Unpopular Essays on a Popular Art.*

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tically—he was not a *creative* artist; he contributed not a line to choreography; he was a propagandist of art par excellence; he would have been a brilliant minister of finance!—it is surely a matter of history that without Diaghilev's encouragement (sometimes equivocal) of *their* talents and his masterful organization of the traveling company that left Russia in 1911 and conquered Western Europe overnight, the names of that dazzling trinity, together with those of their dancers, might never have been known by anyone outside Russia and a Paris cognoscenti! In any event the story of modern ballet would have been vastly different.

If you expect Richard Buckle's *Diaghilev* (570 pages of text, from which 70,000 words have been cut) to ratify the publisher's description, you may be crucially disappointed. Buckle has not, as they claim, "acquired an insight into the mind of Diaghilev." Buckle admires Diaghilev—that much is visible—and, conceivably for this reason, stays well outside him, ostensibly the neutral (and exhaustively informed) biographer, though quick to refute the more damaging aspersions which have been cast at his enigmatic idol. Whether or not getting inside Diaghilev would reveal a mind worth gaining insight into is arguable. Like Napoleon, Diaghilev seems to have lived outside himself, omnipotent and unlovable. Of those countertruths, *Man is what he conceals* or *Man is what he achieves* (Malraux's challenge), the latter is more appropriate to Diaghilev. However, what he concealed, if murky, is far from negligible. Alternatively imperious, pathetic, superstitious, intrepid, and hysterical (he was forever bursting into tears), Diaghilev was a classic example of the homosexual genius attuned to art and committed to power. He was probably less sinister than Romola Nijinsky has declared, and judging by the photos in Buckle's book—beside the more ruthless impressions of his person as given by Cecil Beaton, for example ("speaking meekly in pidgin English")—he was not nearly so suave as Anton Walbrook in *Red Shoes!* Buckle, by refusing to concede the importance of Diaghilev's homosexuality in any coherent estimation of him, forfeits the chance of reconstructing the equivocal image of this notorious man which we have received from other biographers. The limits of Buckle's curiosity about the intricate nature of sexual preferences are exemplified by what must be the damnedest footnote in recent literature, wherein Buckle *assumes* that Diaghilev could not have found Nijinsky a satisfactory lover because, according to Nijinsky's sister, "laughing and pointing to the appropriate place, 'Vaslav very small here.'" Buckle might have shrugged, "On him it looked good." Instead he explains solemnly, "There are few partners who would not be put off by such an inadequate provision of nature." I trust I don't need to underline the dismal definition of love he has so casually predicated.

What Buckle has compiled in gluttonous detail is not so much a biography of the man, Sergei Diaghilev, as a chronological history of the Russian ballet and its multitudinous collaborators up to 1929. To this end he has reclaimed and consulted every theater stub, program, telegram, letter, British newspaper clipping, café menu, railway and steamship timetable, collar stud, hotel napkin, and left-handed suede glove which has come within his reach. Who, besides a reviewer with a conscience, would read his book page by page I can't imagine. Its ideal purchaser would be a balletomane in extremis who would place the volume on his shelf next to Cyril Beaumont's *The Complete Book of Modern Ballets.* At any doubtful moment he could hunt down the color of Nijinsky's tights or Karsavina's shoes in the Russian production of *Giselle,* identify the orchestra conductor at the premiere of *Prince Igor* or *The Rite of Spring,* learn who gave a dinner party for fifty people at Coombe in July 1912 (and the names of the fifty), where and when the first exhibition of Bakst's designs took place, and what Juan Gris thought of the Russian psyche. Everything—pertinent, secondary, or stupefyingly irrelevant—goes into the record. Already on page 8 Buckle is fussing, on the basis of an old photograph, about whether Diaghilev's cousin was accurate when he said that the Diaghilev ancestral dining room could seat sixty at table. In the photo this table is laid for only sixteen; Buckle shakes his head and tries again. "Probably it could be extended; or perhaps this is only a smaller dining-room which the family used when they were not entertaining." Yes, yes, Mr. Buckle, perhaps!

Yet I have to admit that in the long tiring

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Epistolarity

Approaches to a Form

By Janet Gurkin Altman. Though the letter's potential as an artistic form and narrative vehicle has been recognized by writers of nearly every nationality and period from Ovid, in the *Epistulae Heriodum,* to Saul Bellow, in *Herzog,* epistolary literature has only recently become the object of close and sustained critical scrutiny as a result of the revival of the letter form in contemporary fiction, and a growing recognition that the genre was not, in fact, abandoned following the period of its greatest popularity in the eighteenth century, which produced such classics as De Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes,* Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa,* Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloise,* Smollett's *Humphry Clinker,* Goethe's *Werther,* and Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses.* Though they represent a wide diversity in style, plot, and characterization, these works reveal, Professor Altman finds, a surprising number of similar literary structures or patterns that can, in turn, be related to properties inherent in the letter itself. $20.00

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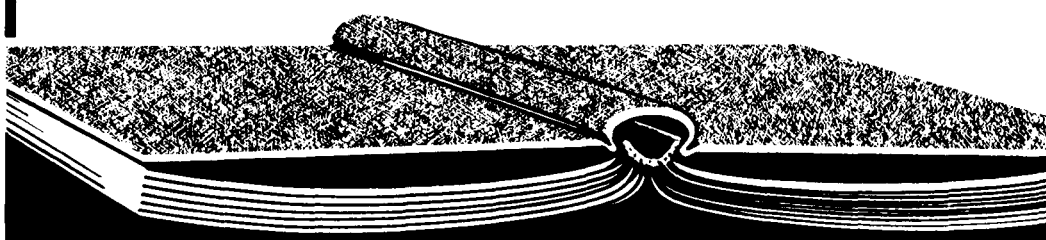

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run this congested montage does yield, to the reader who perseveres, glimpses of a vanished world, opulent, glamorous, and teeming with creative capacities (virtually every major composer and painter of the time sooner or later accepted commissions from Diaghilev); an epic of financial enterprise, cooperative energy, physical self-discipline, flamboyant invention, and breathtaking spite; Europe viewed from the stage, spectacular and, so it must have seemed, inexhaustibly rich; performers in the wings, hopeful; society in the loges, doomed, but enthralled by this postponement of an hour—life danced to music.

For the reader with a taste for the sardonic there are memorable vignettes: the dreadful Diaghilev, whether crossing the Atlantic or the English Channel, donning a life belt as he steps aboard and never removing it until safe at dockside again (we can surely relate this womb terror, as Buckle does not, to Diaghilev's pronouncement that there is nothing in the world uglier than a woman's thighs); Serge Lifar swearing that he has no sexual desire for either man or woman (he didn't say man or beast); Stravinsky asserting to a flabbergasted Proust that the late quartets were the worst things Beethoven ever wrote; an inventive (I feel sure) ballerina convincing Buckle that when, in the twenties, the company performed at Pau (on the Riviera), there were not only rats in the dressing room but lions, left by a traveling circus, under the stage; Georges Rouault, of all people, distracting the choreographer during rehearsals of *The Prodigal Son* by balancing a chair on his nose.

What ceremony else? As Diaghilev and his dancers cross and recross the continent, implanting seeds of future triumph for ballet in London, 750,000 Englishmen (and twice that many French and Germans) are killed in the trenches; the winter garrison of Saint Petersburg is breached; Nijinsky in Switzerland goes mad; T. S. Eliot writes *The Waste Land*. If in our day we find endings more vivid than beginnings, historians and poets are to blame; they give definitive form to our blurred sense of finalities. To say that an age ended with Diaghilev is no great exaggeration, since the year of his death was, coincidentally, the year of the stock market crash, the year when many baroque phenomena of life and art under capitalism came to an end.

Literature certainly has the last word in the sequence I have been reviewing. When the diabetic Diaghilev, eating chocolates, making plans, issuing directives, signing deposit slips, and humming Wagner, dies in Venice attended by his two "sons" (Kochno and Lifar), fifteen years after Thomas Mann's Eschenbach had perished on the Lido—from plague and beauty—we are reminded that circumstance is once again striving to imitate art.

Au Naturel

WALT WHITMAN AMONG THE FRENCH: POET AND MYTH. *By Betsy Erkkila. Princeton University Press. $16.50.*

Reviewed by FREDERICK BROWN

Since the early nineteenth century, when Alexis de Tocqueville observed that "democracy, which shuts the past against the poet, opens the future before him," French literary generations have regularly clasped to their bosom one or another American "natural" in whose work they find not only a precedent but often a license for their aesthetic impieties. Long before Edgar Allan Poe won any perceptible measure of recognition here, he was being widely read by Frenchmen, thanks to Charles Baudelaire, who believed that posterity would honor him above all as Poe's translator. In the more recent past, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, which Gallimard published with a eulogious preface by Valery Larbaud, made him a cult figure among Left Bank intellectuals of the 1930s, when the American critical brotherhood showed no disposition to quarrel with Clifton Fadiman's judgment that Faulkner saw the world awry. For successive French avant-gardes, these skewed visions bespoke an America wonderfully innocent of the formal impedimenta and moral clutter to which they themselves were subject, a hinterland situated in the primitive beginning or in the distant future, but always outside bourgeois

FREDERICK BROWN is the author of *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* and *Theater and Revolution: The Culture of the French Stage.*

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time. It is hardly surprising, then, that that radical antagonist of bourgeois time, Walt Whitman, who sprang forth Rousseau-like as the prophet of an "interior democracy," should have exercised such fascination upon literary Paris.

Professor Erkkila traces the history of this fascination with great thoroughness and an ear trumpet for lines that betray exposure to Whitman's verse. *Leaves of Grass* first received notice in Paris in 1861. It did not, however, pervade the French consciousness until 1872, when two essays—one chiding Whitman, the other heralding him—created a brouhaha whose chief effect was to manifest itself in the feeling commonly shared by young poets of the post-Baudelairian generation that *Leaves of Grass* constituted (as one such poet put it) "a literature utterly alien to our greco-latin culture, where reason and criticism order and compose everything." Whitman soon became the authority invoked by those who gave up rhyme and meter to write free verse. There is no evidence that Mallarmé enjoyed him, but Whitman's spirit lapped round the edges of the Great Man and washed over several less self-sufficient poets associated with the symbolist movement, notably Jules Laforgue. Laforgue's discovery of *Leaves of Grass,* which he proposed to translate—as if translating Whitman might bring him relief from the irony in which he girded himself—is one of the odder conjunctions this book records. There are many others.

It is Professor Erkkila's thesis that the second wave of French writers whom Whitman influenced found him germane more for his world view than for the rhetorical idiosyncrasies of his verse, and indeed *Leaves of Grass* apparently stood surety to the most widely divergent creeds. During the 1890s one encounters André Gide reading it before producing a series of lyrical exhortations, *Les Nourritures terrestres,* in which the writer, not unlike the Whitmanian Person, urges a young man to root out his Christian conscience and follow the dictates of his body. At roughly the same time, Paul Claudel, who deserted Mallarmé's parlor for the Catholic church, began experimenting with a rhythmic line or verset which would soon enable him to pour forth odes and dramas that evoke Whitman not only in their poetic demeanor but in the dream they harbor of selfhood unrestricted by time and space. "Like Whitman, Claudel makes frequent use of the march and the procession to represent his optimistic, progressive, and unitary vision of the world," observes Erkkila.

Young men fed up with the elegant Pierrots, the shadows and deliquescences and half-tints so dear to symbolism, outdid one another in militant strategies of every kind and enlisted Whitman's sponsorship, much as they enlisted Rimbaud's. A synonym for the fauve energy being celebrated just then by avant-garde painters, but also for the humanitarian ethos that imbued literary movements like the "Abbaye," Whitmanism was prominent in that host of other isms to emerge before World War I from the debris of nineteenth-century artistic and moral conventions. In a final chapter, Erkkila brings the story through its first revolution, if not quite full circle, as we see Guillaume Apollinaire, who propagandized what he called the *esprit nouveau,* tweaking Whitman's gray beard but writing poems in which echoes of *Leaves of Grass* are detectable.

The paradoxes often fostered by transatlantic dialogue do not escape Professor Erkkila (whose introduction, entitled "France in Whitman," invites us to consider "Whitman in France" as something in the nature of a return call). After Whitman is shown pasturing on Rousseau, Michelet, and George Sand, one is left with the thought that what Frenchmen may have found particularly delicious in *Leaves of Grass* was the taste of their own cud, Americanized. As much cannot be said the other way around, surely not where T. S. Eliot is concerned. His fondness for Jules Laforgue did not mitigate his repugnance for Whitman, whom he declared he could hardly read at all, and then only after conquering "an aversion to his form as well as to much of his matter."

One danger that haunts the academic genre that this book exemplifies—and it may never be altogether avoidable—lies in the tendency of scholars to picture their "man" as the *fons et origo* of works on which he may have exerted only casual influence. Even when Professor Erkkila does not indulge in self-validating argument—a surmise on one page of her text has often, by the next, mysteriously become a foregone conclusion—those phrases on which she most often relies

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("suggestive of Whitman," "reminiscent of Whitman," "Whitmanian," "in Whitman fashion," "seconded Whitman") have the effect of crowding out, through sheer iteration, every source of poetic nourishment but one.

Let us take, for example, her remarks about Blaise Cendrars: "Cendrars also reveals the way Whitman's non-spatial and non-temporal poetic 'I' anticipated the dynamic camera eye of the cinema. In 1920, Cendrars collaborated with Abel Gance in making the experimental film *La Roue*. For the visual center of this film, he again made use of the train, Whitman's symbol of motion and power." Can it possibly stand to reason that Cendrars revealed the way Whitman's "I" behaved (rather than, say, his own)? Or that the train he filmed was fraught with Whitman's symbolism? Cendrars, like others before him, enjoys only nominal independence here, for his inner life *is* Walt Whitman, to whom he finds himself bound as a loyal steward, if not a perfect Sosia duplicating what a mastermind saw and felt and dreamed. Nothing in this study is so "Whitmanian," so "reminiscent" of the Whitman who asked "What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face?/Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?" as is the body of suppositions on which Erkkila's own narrative seems to rest. While Whitman could imagine "others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them," a prophetic fantasy of the kind that sometimes generates great poetry may not be the best prescription for a critical method.

A better prescription might embody the wisdom Pascal attributes to his Hidden God: "You would not have sought Me, if you had not already found Me." Whitman exerted influence all right, but Erkkila's understanding of its nature is hampered by her failure to recognize that the preoccupation with totality so common among those who read him did not arise in them—any more than in Whitman—from a "democratic," "humanitarian," "life-oriented" impulse; that the ground for Whitmanism in France had been prepared much earlier by Rousseau, whose oeuvre is a monumental brief against individual perception and conscience. Every chapter of Erkkila's book contains manifestos illustrating the predicament so brilliantly analyzed in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, which begins with comments on Romain Rolland's idea that religious energy springs from an oceanic feeling—a feeling "as of something unlimited, boundless."

Why so many French writers repudiated the norms of social discourse and even "words of the tribe" during the late nineteenth century is a knotty question, but we can at least observe that literature came to express a desire for some more complete, more instinctually gratifying mode of existence than could be accommodated by the civilized mind, with its elaborate constraints. When we read Jules Laforgue's poem "Albums" (rather inaccurately translated by Erkkila), his buffoonery should not distract us from the violence it only half conceals:

On m'a dit la vie au Far-West et les Prairies,
Et mon sang a gémi: "Que violà ma patrie! . . . "
Déclassé du vieux monde, être sans foi ni loi,
Desperado! là-bas, là-bas, je serai roi! . . .
Oh! là-bas, m'y scalper de mon cerveau d'Europe!
Piaffer, redevenir une vierge antilope,
Sans littérature, un gars de proie, citoyen
Du hasard et sifflant l'argot californien.
Un colon vague et pur, éleveur, architecte,
Chasseur, pêcheur, joueur, au-dessus des
Pandectes!*

This assault upon the head as a repository of law, of reason, of letters brought together decapitators who generally set store by the belief that true selfhood would be achieved through self-immolation, that "being," in all its fullness, would not grace the initiate until he had divested himself of his cultural substance and bound himself over to a force stronger than mind. Some found this force in the Church, which drove a thriving trade among fin de siècle aesthetes. Others found it in nature, as was the case with Gide, or naturists like Maurice Le Blond, who wrote in 1895: "Young people are deserting the muse-

*I've heard yarns about life in the Far West and the Prairies/And my blood moaned: "Now there's my homeland! . . . "/Declassed from the old world, a being without faith or law,/A desperado! there, over there I shall be king!/Oh, to scalp myself of my European brain over there!/To prance, to become a virgin antelope once again,/Without literature, a lad of prey, a citizen/Of chance piping in California slang/A settler unsettled and pure, a cattle rancher, architect/Hunter, fisherman, gambler, clear above the Pandects!

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ums, debating societies, and libraries for the sublime and tender teaching of Nature and of Life. . . . What, then, does it mean to be a naturist? It is not to cultivate one's Self; it is . . . to bend piously beneath the yoke of Nature." Presently young poets would establish in surrealism a religious order predicated on worship of the Unconscious. And when this religion failed them, apostates flocked to another god, converting their reverence for the id into reverence for the historically destined proletariat.

Had Professor Erkkila set herself the task of showing how *Leaves of Grass* impinged on a tradition in which the poet claims the priest's mantle, or how it anticipated a new primitivism whose articles have become the catechism of French literary radicals, her book would have been much richer. All the material is there, diligently gathered, but so, alas, are those unexamined epithets ("humanitarian," "organic," et cetera) that coerce it into telling a tale of virtue.

Quiet Killer

JACK DEMPSEY: THE MANASSA MAULER. *By Randy Roberts. Louisiana State University Press. $14.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT NISBET

This is Jack Dempsey complete, warts and all. The author, who teaches history at the University of Maryland, has dared take his professional skills from conventional pursuits to what television accurately calls the wide world of sports. Few things more completely express the difference between nineteenth- and twentieth-century America than the mass phenomenon of spectator sports, particularly professional sports. From any point of view, professional sports as a sector of American society at the present time is important, meriting the attention of a good many disciplines. Economically it is a multibillion-dollar industry with spectacular growth rates, taken over the past half-century. Socially and psychologically it is hard to think of any other public sphere except religion that unites as many individuals as closely and lastingly as profes-

ROBERT NISBET's most recent book is *History of the Idea of Progress.*

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sional sports. The Celtics, Steelers, Dodgers, and Flyers have passionate followers, not just fans. When one identifies himself as a long-time member of the Chicago Cubs community in America, he is saying something more precise and important at the present time about himself than if he were speaking about either of the political parties. And culturally, what other sphere of life now produces for the American mind as many images, metaphors, myths, heroes, and, of special importance to youth, incentives as does the sports world?

If there is a single individual with patriarchal-heroic status in this world it is Jack Dempsey, whose boxing career flourished during—indeed helped create—the Roaring Twenties. We need take nothing away from the great Babe Ruth, or for that matter Bill Tilden, Bobby Jones, and Red Grange, when we accord highest honors to Dempsey. No million-dollar gate was known before the 1920s. There were five such gates during that decade, and Dempsey was the centerpiece of every one of them. Before Dempsey the boxing ring had about the same social status as the cockfighting pit. Within two years after his spectacular defeat of the giant Jess Willard for the heavyweight championship, ringside seats at a Dempsey fight were almost as cherished as boxes at Belmont as indicators of social standing. Dempsey brought out the classes as well as the masses—those who were accustomed to watching polo, tennis, and golf and, in far greater numbers of course, those who were most at home in the Polo Grounds bleachers.

One of the many merits of Roberts's book is its well-documented portrayal of the two Dempseys. The first, well enough known to us, was the Dempsey of the prize ring, savage in his assault upon an opponent, merciless in use of fists, never so dangerous as when injured, and as activated by the killer impulse as any athlete who ever lived. He knocked the huge Willard down seven times in the first round, and at the end of the third round, Willard, his jaw broken, six teeth knocked out, the right side of his face an ugly bower of red and purple contusions, his body sagging from the fire storm of Dempsey hooks to the midriff, was a fallen giant, unable to respond to the fourth-round bell. Before the fight, the promoter, Tex Rickard, had seriously and volubly feared that Willard would literally kill the 180-pound Dempsey, thus setting back boxing for years. Nor was it different in the fabled Firpo fight, where Dempsey, in what has been called "the wildest moment in the history of boxing," was knocked through the ropes by Firpo, clear out of the ring in the closing seconds of the first round. But Dempsey had knocked Firpo to the canvas at least a half-dozen times, and within the first minute of the second round he had him on his back, unconscious, bleeding from mouth, nose, and ears, another giant slain by Dempsey. Roberts writes, "Dempsey rushed over to Firpo and picked up the 220-pound Argentine as if he weighed no more than a bale of hay."

That is one Dempsey, and an authentic one. Equally authentic, however, is the other—the Dempsey of quiet, conservative, and modest bearing in public. He had risen from obscurity and poverty to wealth and idolization, but many millions of middle-class Americans could think, "He's just like us." And he was. Nothing impressed the English, French, and Germans more—when Dempsey, as world champion and hero to tens of millions, made his first visit across the Atlantic in the mid-twenties—than to discover a Dempsey they could not have for a moment imagined in advance. Roberts cites a *Times* piece written by Lord Northcliffe himself, stressing how its author had expected to meet someone "loud" in dress, manner, and speech, and had found in fact a man "quiet spoken, almost excessively modest," "refined" in speech, and possessed of "perfect manners." Lord Melford described Dempsey as "master of himself, easy, natural and unaffected, and free from any pose."

Roberts gives us a long-needed, documented treatment of Dempsey's childhood—one of eleven children in a stable, affectionate Mormon family, early aware of his innate combativeness and encouraged by his mother to become a professional fighter—and of the *Wanderjahren* in his teens when he rode the rods to one western town after another seeking saloon fights (usually bare fisted), both for the money to live on and for the experience. In Salt Lake City and then in San Francisco, Dempsey fought his first real professional fights, with modest but convincing success. He went to New York on his own, to be exploited by a so-called manager in villain-

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ous fashion, and was forced by failure to return to the West. Then occurred the fateful meeting with Jack Kearns, perhaps the shrewdest manager in boxing history, the equally fateful meeting of Kearns and Dempsey with Tex Rickard, and the quick rise through victories over all other leading white heavyweights—to the Willard fight under the broiling Toledo sun, to the stunning defeat of the giant champion, and then the heavyweight crown. The relationship between Rickard the promoter, Kearns the manager, and Dempsey the giant-killing hero could not have been improved upon, so far as promotion of the interest of each was concerned. If any one of them had been missing, the history of boxing would have been very different indeed. Each was vital to "the greatest match of the century" (with Carpentier; it was far from that), to "the greatest fight since the Silurian Age" (Firpo; it may well have been), and eventually to the two Tunney fights—the first in Philadelphia, the second at Soldier Field in Chicago before a hundred thousand people who had paid close to four million dollars to see the rematch. Nothing roared in the twenties as did heavyweight boxing, and Rickard, Kearns, and Dempsey were crucial to it.

Roberts's separate chapters on the great Dempsey fights, from Willard to Tunney, are not only superb but, by virtue of prodigious research, definitive. The twenties, as Roberts realizes full well, was also a great decade of sportswriters: Grantland Rice, Westbrook Pegler, Hype Igoe, Paul Gallico, and a good many others all of whom had the national status that only a Red Smith now has in our journalistically impoverished age. Roberts draws plentifully and meticulously upon the myriad accounts of the major fights. "Myriad" is perhaps understatement: there were 250 sportswriters at ringside for the Firpo fight alone. The account Roberts gives us of Firpo's legendary catapulting of Dempsey into the ringside seats is restrained and exact, but the high drama of the event—sufficient to send a packed Polo Grounds into sheer hysteria—comes through forcefully.

Equally good, and much more important for the historical record, are the two chapters on the Tunney fights. Through the pinpoint

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detail we are given of the immediate background of the first—Dempsey's three years of ring idleness, his increasingly rocky marriage with Estelle Taylor, suicide in the family, the mysterious poisoning of Dempsey the night before the fight with several hours of constant retching—we are prepared for the one-sided nature of the fight and the Tunney victory that shocked, saddened, and stunned the vast boxing world on both sides of the Atlantic. It could have had no other possible outcome, given all that led up to it.

The second Tunney fight, though, is immensely different in one highly dramatic respect: the forever controversial "long count" through which Tunney had some sixteen seconds instead of ten to recover from the savage Dempsey blows which put him, hurt and badly dazed, on the canvas in the historic seventh round. Here, too, Roberts has rendered important service in his rounding up of all pertinent data and his eloquent and lucid marshaling of them. Although Roberts properly refrains from the judgment, there is no doubt in this reader's mind that the fight would have been Dempsey's by a knockout if Tunney had not had six extra seconds in which to recover consciousness, clear his head, and get back on his feet in a condition sufficient to hold on or backpedal long enough to save himself. When the referee, Dave Barry, returned to the prostrate Tunney, after having virtually pushed the kill-intoxicated Dempsey to a neutral corner, the official timekeeper had just reached the audible count of five, expecting the referee to pick it up. But Barry chose instead, in a decision that still reverberates, to start his count from *one*. Since, by Tunney's own later admission, Barry's count of three was the first thing the dazed Tunney heard from the time he was knocked down by Dempsey, we can see easily enough what a prime target Tunney would, in all probability—certainty, I choose to say—have been for lusting Dempsey, with his refound ferocity of fists. And yet the responsibility was by no means the referee's alone. Dempsey knew the rule of farthest neutral corner, but chose to resist for crucial seconds when Barry ordered him to it. As Roberts makes us see, Dempsey was destroyed in some degree by the very ring fury, the killer syndrome ("I couldn't move, I just couldn't," he later explained to the writer Dan Daniel; "all I wanted was to kill the sonofabitch") that had for years carried him to spectacular triumph.

As I said at the beginning, Roberts gives us the warts too. Foremost is the draft-dodger, slacker image that Dempsey, for all his great popularity, had to cope with during World War I. But he had been given the very common 4-A deferment by his San Francisco draft board on the ground that he had to support his parents. And if he was a slacker, he was in the distinguished company of Babe Ruth, Benny Leonard, and dozens of other first-line athletes. They, however, were generally shrewder than Dempsey. Babe Ruth joined the Massachusetts militia, which protected him from the draft and permitted him to play through the war with the Red Sox—and, it is worth emphasizing, without criticism from the press or the public. The majority of the professional boxers joined up in the advance certainty that they would become boxing instructors in the training camps, spending most of their time on training for exhibition bouts. No doubt Dempsey would have done the same had it not been for Kearns's desperate efforts to keep his newfound treasure locked into prizefighting alone. (We learn from Roberts that toward the end of the war Dempsey was in the process of enlisting in the Navy; he would serve in the Coast Guard in World War II.)

Second only to the war image he was obliged to carry for years was the odium of his failure to fight the great black heavyweight Harry Wills. "Dempsey's scared of Wills" was a charge one heard often during that period. Dempsey wasn't, of course; he never feared anyone; he was temperamentally incapable of fear. He had fought black heavyweights out West, on his way up. In 1922 Dempsey was in his prime, whereas Wills was thirty-three years old and, good as Wills undoubtedly had been, it seems unlikely that he could have triumphed over the Dempsey of Firpo-kill. Dempsey repeatedly said he would fight Wills any time a match was set up. The problem was Kearns and, especially, Rickard. Kearns was uneasy at the thought that his valuable piece of fighter property could be damaged if defeated by a black. Rickard was fearful of the kind of race riots which had broken out in various parts of the country in 1910, after the brilliant and powerful black

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fighter, Jack Johnson, had humiliatingly beaten the widely revered Jim Jefferies, who had come out of retirement in order to give Johnson a crack at the title. On balance, Dempsey should have used his great national popularity as a club over both Kearns and Rickard and insisted upon a Wills match, thus stilling the rising clamor from press and public for this spectacular event. Nat Fleischer, the able editor of the newly founded *Ring* magazine, led the crusade to drop the color line, and although it failed to achieve a Dempsey-Wills fight, its continuation made it possible, years later, for Joe Louis to rescue the heavyweight boxing world from the doldrums it had lain in ever since Dempsey's defeat in 1927.

A further aspect of the Wills matter: if Dempsey had overruled Tex Rickard and Doc Kearns and had accepted the Wills challenge during the three years before the first Tunney fight in 1926, he would have been in much better condition for that fight. The three years' layoff was the longest of any heavyweight titleholder in history. Coupled with the easy Hollywood life of a "film star" (best forgotten by even the most ardent of Dempsey's followers), it did him no good—as was obvious to almost everyone who watched the sparring sessions when Dempsey was getting ready to fight Tunney.

The always interesting, if futile, question of just how good Dempsey was compared with earlier and later fighters is understandably and properly left alone by Randy Roberts. But a reviewer may rush in where historians fear to tread. Ducking the further question of who was the greatest of heavyweights in absolute terms (there are too many variables of time, prime, and circumstance), I feel bound to say this, in the words cherished by all devotees of the Sweet Science: the 180–190-pound Dempsey was, pound for pound, the greatest of heavyweights, just as Sugar Ray Robinson even more surely was, pound for pound, the greatest of all the weights.

I hope Randy Roberts's fine book is successful and will tempt other historians into an area heretofore largely occupied by ghosts, hacks, and eulogists. Sports is a very large and important area of American culture, and its events, acts, combats, heroes, and villains have been preserved in records much more

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accurately—nay, fanatically—than those generally left behind by politicians, soldiers, businessmen, artists, and writers.

Nettle of Danger, Flower of Safety

THE LIFE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD. *By Antony Alpers. Viking. $16.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM HALEY

Those who have been enchanted with Willa Cather's *Not Under Forty* will remember most vividly her chance meeting at Aix-les-Bains in 1930 with Madame Franklin Grout. Conversation revealed that this doughty octogenarian, who went sketching in the mountains, enjoyed the opera, and assiduously attended concerts of modern music, was Flaubert's "nièce Caroline." On the shelf of Flaubert's letters, those to her have a volume to themselves. Thanks to her uncle's encouragement she spoke English well and recalled for Willa Cather her memories of Flaubert, Turgenev, George Sand, and other immortals.

Not Under Forty was published in 1936. According to Willa Cather's prefatory note, those for whom the book would have interest would now have to be not under eighty-five. But interest is not immutable; it fluctuates from one generation to another. At this particular moment the last of her six subjects has the greatest appeal. It was Katherine Mansfield.

Willa Cather never met her. On a liner in 1920 she fell in with a New Englander who had. "He was a true chip, and proud of the old block." Early American history was his passion. He admired the works of Francis Parkman and George Otto Trevelyan. Yet suddenly he asked Willa Cather what she thought of Katherine Mansfield, whom he had seen several times. Many years earlier he had been a passenger on the same boat with her and her family. The little girl, who wandered on her own and explored the steamer for herself, "adopted" him for the voyage. "She struck him as intensely alert, with a deep curiosity altogether different from the flighty, excited curiosity usual in children. She turned things over in her head and asked him questions which surprised him."

In London, years later, he had "heard talk of a girl from New Zealand who 'could knock the standard British authors into a cocked hat.' She scorned conventions and had got herself talked about." He saw her in a restaurant: "the same face, the same eyes." Her looks belied the gossip about her. She seemed almost demure. He felt a strong desire to meet her again. He decided to read something of hers first. It was *Je ne parle pas français*. He found it out of character, "artificial and unpleasantly hysterical, full of affectations; she had none as a child." There was no meeting.

For many other readers also this story of Katherine Mansfield's has not been "nice." A flashy, repulsive, evil French journalist cynically recalls how his English friend, Dick Harmon, brought a beautiful, vulnerable English girl to Paris and on arrival abandoned her immediately to return to his mother. What those readers have not known is the tale's background or the circumstances under which it was written. There have been many glosses on it. Her letter to John Middleton Murry, saying that it was "a cry against corruption," has been quoted. Now Antony Alpers has filled in the details, as he has done those of every phase of Katherine's life. It is still not possible to say "To understand all is to forgive all." There is much that will never be understood. But to know all, at any rate all that is ever likely to be known, does deepen one's compassion.

For the same author to write two biographies of Katherine Mansfield in twenty-five years is, on the face of it, supererogatory. Yet as one who for nearly sixty years has been reading Katherine Mansfield and what others have written about her, this latest *Life* is far from otiose. In his 1953 volume Mr. Alpers, also a New Zealander, was inhibited because many of those involved were still alive. Despite the great flood of material since her death in 1923, much was still inaccessible. Also Mr. Alpers was then a much younger man. Now it is difficult to believe that any new writer will need to traverse the same

SIR WILLIAM HALEY was director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1944 to 1952 and editor of *The Times* (London) from 1952 to 1966.

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ground again. With appendices, chronology, bibliography, notes, and index, together with the author's candor when he can only conjecture, this is a scholarly work. Nothing could make Katherine Mansfield "a butterfly on the wheel," but more detail could rapidly reduce her to a fly in the computer. (The fly metaphor will fall into place later.)

What is it in her life and in her writings that can legitimately generate interest fifty-eight years after her death? Or can overcome, moreover, the premature publication of her *Journal* and her *Letters*, followed by fuller versions later. Whether Middleton Murry did this through a desire to register his wife's literary status or to cash in on her reputation one does not know. It did exacerbate readers.

Katherine Mansfield's life cannot be said to have been uneventful. It is not cruel to describe the events so often researched as sordid and trivial. Mr. Alpers has explored her origins thoroughly. There is nothing in them to forecast the child to come. Born in 1888, one of the daughters of a New Zealand banker, she wrote her first stories before she was ten. She was sent to school in London, suffered a spell back in New Zealand, then finally left for Europe when she was nineteen. Her father gave her a modest allowance.

Katherine Mansfield's relations with her father were a long, sorry series of misunderstandings. Each mistook the other's motives. He had no capacity to appreciate his daughter's writings and no gift of expression himself. His notes on her letters seem brutally curt. He was merely businesslike. But he was not a complete philistine: when she was dead he gave her last home in New Zealand to the government to establish a National Picture Gallery. They loved each other in their incompatible ways. The long letter Katherine wrote to him fourteen months before she died is harrowing to read with hindsight.

Often the banker must have wondered how he could have sired such a daughter. Reaching London the second time, she believed she had been drugged and made pregnant in Montevideo by a fellow passenger. How many abortions she had later is not worth establishing. I must confess that I was shocked by early reports of Mr. Alpers's discovery that for years she suffered from unsuspected gon-

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orrhea and that he was publishing this. (How many of us really want the whole truth?) But in his book the fact is unstressed and made relevant. In New Zealand, as she frankly described herself, she was "poor—obscure—just eighteen years of age—with a rapacious appetite for everything and principles as light as my purse." Back in Europe she had a succession of affairs. Between them she married George Bowden, a singer who later became a teacher in American universities, and left him within a few hours, returning briefly when it suited her. His second wife was not far wrong in saying that he had been "the only gentleman in the whole darned bunch." He did her the great service of suggesting that she take her German pension stories to A. R. Orage, then editing the *New Age*.

Despite all the stories she wrote, if she had never met Middleton Murry, D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, and others, it is doubtful that her life would have maintained the interest it still does. She became an integral part of their lives and of the London literary world of her time. She figures in the biographies of her more distinguished contemporaries. We have been shown her through many eyes. We have also been shown that promiscuity and immorality are not confined to any one class. But of course her chief herald has been Murry.

Katherine Mansfield first met John Middleton Murry in December 1911. For good or for ill he became the central figure in the rest of her life. There is all too much testimony that he was an unlikable man. Those of us who were enthusiastic first subscribers to the *Adelphi*, which he founded the year Katherine died, became increasingly dubious about his integrity as its editor. In his life with Katherine, before and after their marriage, he was selfish and self-centered. She railed at him. Others have denounced him. Yet the "farewell" letter she wrote to him five months before her death ended: "In spite of everything—how happy we have been! I feel no other lovers have walked the earth more joyfully—in spite of all."

Virginia Woolf told her sister that Katherine seemed to have "gone every sort of hog since she was 17" but had "a much better idea of writing than most." Mr. Alpers's chapter on the relations between the two authors is excellent. "When Katherine died, Virginia confessed in her diary that Katherine's was 'the only writing I have ever been jealous of.' " In fact the voice of each was different. They worked on different scales: Virginia Woolf's output was large; Katherine Mansfield's was small. And a fraction of that small output has to carry the rest.

Before we come to Katherine Mansfield's fiction, her other writings call for brief notice. *Novels and Novelists*, the collection of her reviews for the *Athenaeum* in 1919 and 1920 while Murry was editing it, still has value. It is useless to compare her with a Sainte-Beuve or a Remy de Gourmont. They could range eclectically through the whole of literature, past and present. She had to deal with current fiction as it arrived. Murry pointed out that she reviewed nothing by Wells, Bennett, or D. H. Lawrence, but Conrad, Dostoevski, George Moore, E. M. Forster, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf did come under her scrutiny. More interesting than Katherine's judgments in these reviews is her concentration on what each writer was trying to do. She was the creative artist as critic. Much of her *Journal* is *disjecta membra*.

Ultimately it is by her short stories that Katherine Mansfield will survive. Her finest works drew upon her childhood. Professor Ian Gordon's collection of her New Zealand stories, *Undiscovered Country*, bears out this claim. *Prelude*, *At the Bay*, and *The Doll's House* have a timeless magic. Professor Gordon includes *The Fly*. But I am sure this late tale was, only at one remove, a threnody for her brother, killed in the war. More powerfully it was a lament for herself: it marked the acceptance of her final defeat.

When she was eighteen she had written in her journal, "To acknowledge the presence of fear is to give birth to failure." Later she liked to quote Hotspur's "Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety." Murry put it on her tombstone. As consumption took an increasingly relentless hold on her, she wilted. Writing to Murry on her arrival at Bandol in January 1918, she described herself as feeling "like a fly who has been dropped in the milk-jug, and fished out again, but is still too milky and drowned to start cleaning up yet." In *The Fly*, written less than a year before her death, she pictured a businessman

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brooding on the past, fishing a fly out of his inkpot, and then idly splashing fresh ink on it each time it had cleaned itself, until it was dead. It was her last paraphrase of Shakespeare: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; / They kill us for their sport." She died at the Gurdjieff Institute in Fontainebleau on January 9, 1923. She was thirty-four.

Her legacy was small, but precious. Those who demand to be told its nature can be referred back to Willa Cather.

. . . in Katherine Mansfield one recognised virtuosity, a love for the medium she had chosen. The qualities of a second-rate writer can easily be defined, but a first-rate writer can only be experienced.

The true measure of Mr. Alpers's success will be the new readers he sends to Katherine Mansfield's tales.

Spreading the Word

ARNA BONTEMPS–LANGSTON HUGHES LETTERS, 1925–1967. *Edited by Charles H. Nichols. Dodd, Mead. $17.95.*

Reviewed by HORACE A. PORTER

In 1961, a few years before his death, Langston Hughes wrote Arna Bontemps, a lifelong friend and fellow writer: ". . . I am nothing but a literary sharecropper. Swing low, sweet chariot, and rescue me!" Hughes had just returned from a trip to Uganda and, as he told Bontemps, "after fifty-two years of literary service," he was broke. In 1940, with both writers barely making ends meet, Hughes had written a similar letter to which Bontemps had replied: "Speaking of the coming to year's end broke—that's nothing if you've been everywhere and done everything! A socially conscious artist wouldn't want a *surplus*, would he?"

The hyperbole and congenial repartee of the above quotations are characteristic of the twenty-three hundred letters James Mercer Langston Hughes and Arna Wendell Bontemps exchanged, without extended interruptions, between 1925 and the time of

HORACE A. PORTER teaches English and Afro-American Studies at Dartmouth College.

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Hughes's death in 1967; Bontemps died in 1973. Both were born in 1902—Hughes in Joplin, Missouri, and Bontemps in Alexandria, Louisiana. They were among the first Afro-Americans to devote their lives almost exclusively to literature. During the forties, Carl Van Vechten, an impresario of American and Afro-American art and culture, urged the writers to make their letters a part of what is now the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters at Yale. Fortunately, they did so, getting their papers in order near the end of their lives.

In recent years, the letters of a number of celebrated writers have been published, enabling us to see, among others, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Flaubert, O'Connor, Nabokov, and Wilson backstage pulling ropes and strings. In fact, letters of literary life are being published with such frequency that one wonders about the apparent wide audience for them. One suspects that many readers are more interested in writers' lives than in their works. Whatever the case, published letters and papers of Afro-Americans are virtually nonexistent. Excepting several volumes of *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, three volumes of *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, and one volume of *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, one is hard put to find what Afro-American leaders, let alone writers, have thought and said privately. Consequently, the publication of *Arna Bontemps–Langston Hughes Letters, 1925–1967*, a selection of five hundred letters, is a singular event in American literary history. Theirs is the first published correspondence between Afro-American friends and men of letters.

Bontemps and Hughes were prolific writers. They wrote poetry, plays, songs, novels, short stories, critical essays, histories, biographies, autobiographies, and children's books. They published a combined total of some sixty-odd books. They co-authored some. They edited others. They published widely in American journals and popular magazines. Bontemps published in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR and reported to Hughes that you, gentle readers, are "heavy-thinking." Hughes also translated works by Federico García Lorca, Nicolás Guillén, Gabriela Mistral, and Jacques Roumaine. Readers of Hughes—his *The Weary Blues, I Wonder as I Wander, Simple Speaks His Mind*—will recall his celebration of Afro-American folk culture, humor, and speech as well as his experimentation with the blues, jazz, and spirituals in his works. Similarly, those familiar with the works of Bontemps—his *God Sends Sunday, Black Thunder, The Harlem Renaissance Remembered*—will be reminded of Bontemps's manipulation of form as well as his use of Afro-American folklore and history. His *Black Thunder* (1936), a novel based on the slave revolt led by Gabriel Prosser, anticipates the so-called "nonfiction" novels which are currently flourishing.

When Hughes and Bontemps met in Harlem during the winter of 1924, Hughes had already published "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"—his most popular poem even today. The young writers quickly discovered that they had similar interests and ambitions and were astonished by their striking physical resemblance. Over the years, various hosts and masters of ceremony introduced one as the other.

Despite their common interests and physical similarity, they were markedly different. Although both rebelled against their middle-class upbringing by embracing Afro-American folk culture, Hughes was more the iconoclast and gypsy. After spending a short time at Columbia University, he threw his books into the sea and went seafaring and sojourning around the world. (He later earned an A.B. from Lincoln University.) When he returned to Harlem, during the winter he met Bontemps, he could speak French and Spanish fluently. He charmed his many admirers with stories of the Afro-American exiles he had met in Montmartre. In Hughes's precocious beginning, one foresees his future. He lived to see his works widely translated. (Picasso designed the book jacket for the Italian edition of his autobiography, *The Big Sea.*) He was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. When he died, he was a writer of international fame.

Bontemps was never internationally acclaimed. Unlike Hughes, he did not go abroad early in his life. After attending a Seventh-Day Adventist academy, he enrolled at Pacific Union College and graduated in 1924. He later obtained a degree in library science

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from the University of Chicago. In 1943 he became the librarian at Fisk University in Nashville. He remained there until he moved to the University of Illinois in 1966 and on to Yale in 1969. Bontemps and Hughes were different in other significant ways. Hughes was a bachelor throughout his life. Bontemps married Alberta Johnson in 1926 and was the devoted father of five children. To be sure, each *writer possessed a fine literary sensibility*; each was creative. But Bontemps was also a fine literary critic. He consciously cultivated his critical talent; Hughes did not. Hughes, the more prolific of the two, wrote rapidly and usually made his deadlines. Bontemps often referred to himself as a "plodder." Both shared the habit of occasionally writing from dusk to dawn. They rapidly scribbled many of their letters at daybreak.

Nevertheless, their correspondence is an important contribution to the record of Afro-American experience. They knew and discussed most prominent Afro-Americans—whether artists, athletes, entertainers, or politicians. Their letters are sprinkled with arcane facts about people of color at home and abroad. They knew, for instance, that an Afro-American discovered Arizona and that Baudelaire had a black mistress. More important, the letters provide a complex portrait of two writers at work. We see them reading and informing each other of the nature and merit of their fellow writers' work. We witness them wrestling with the angel Art and avoiding the daily briars and hassles of literary life. They advise, encourage, and tease each other to the very end.

Professor Charles H. Nichols of Brown University should be congratulated for ushering these letters into print. Considering the significance of the correspondence and the fact that heretofore most scholars have not been allowed to see it, the letters should have been presented to the reading public with the editorial and scholarly care they so richly deserve. This remarkable collection, however, is marred by inadequate editorial procedures. While praising Bontemps and claiming that Hughes "is without rival . . . the most prolific and influential Afro-American writer in our history," the editor never mentions his manner of handling the inevitable problems of

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correction, dating, and deletion. Almost every letter is shot through with ellipses, but the editor fails to provide annotations, except an occasional first or last name placed here and there. The reader well versed in Afro-American literature and history will have trouble deciphering some of the letters; the general reader will face, among other puzzles, scores of difficult allusions.

Furthermore, while the editor in his brief preface lists obvious criteria for selection—that is, letters which "reveal interesting aspects of the personality of the writer"—and in his prologue provides biographical sketches of the writers, he neither gives an account of missing letters nor fully addresses the issue of how the writers felt about the publication of their correspondence. One finds, by reading the present collection, that the writers did not entirely rule out eventual publication. Yet the editor simply states that they wrote "with posterity in mind." Did these Afro-American writers view the potential publication of their letters from a peculiar or dark tower? Should the reader assume that their inevitable self-censoring was of a special nature? We know, for example, T. S. Eliot's codicil to his will: "I do not wish my executors to facilitate or countenance the writing of a biography of me." We know how W. H. Auden felt about such matters. Did either Bontemps or Hughes attempt to protect himself in a similar manner?

This is not, to be sure, a cry for love letters or dirty linen. The private lives of writers should be respected. But the editor of a collection of important letters should tell readers why he is including certain letters and not others. This is hardly a gratuitous point. What does Nichols mean by the following: "The personal revelation of the man, Langston Hughes, will not be found in these letters. . . . He rarely lowers the mask." Since at one point the editor refers to Hughes's "deeply private sadness," what, one wonders, is the nature of the mask? Moreover, it is unlikely that a man would write to a close friend and confidant for thirty-seven years and never once mention aspects of his romantic or sexual life. Has Professor Nichols, for whatever reasons, chosen not to print such letters? Were the *de profundis* letters burned? Referring to the famous cases of Dickens and James in *Telling Lives*, Marc Pachter reminds us that "the field of literary history is thick with the smoke of burning letters."

Despite editorial shortcomings, the letters Professor Nichols has selected are extraordinary documents. One of the more interesting features of the correspondence is Bontemps's and Hughes's discussion of other writers, about whom they made literary as well as personal judgments. During the summer of 1942 while at Yaddo, an artist colony at Saratoga Springs, Hughes met Carson McCullers, Kenneth Fearing, Newton Arvin, and Katherine Anne Porter. He grew fond of Carson McCullers; he told Bontemps that she read more than anyone he knew. Hughes and Bontemps also knew Jack Conroy and Nelson Algren. They commented on Conroy's heavy drinking from time to time. They did not regard highly the Fugitive poets and their friends. Writing Bontemps from the University of Chicago in 1949, Hughes commented on Robert Lowell's state of mind: "They say on the campus here that Robert Lowell, while visiting the Tates recently, went completely out of his mind and had to be flown back to a sanitorium in Boston." Bontemps replied: "Sorry about Lowell but not too surprised, if it's true. He has read and remembered more than he can synthesize. The whole T. S. Eliot coterie, including Ezra Pound and those who gave him that big award this year, is a sick lot."

Their comments on Afro-American writers were equally fascinating. They believed in aiding and, to quote Bontemps, "hailing major Negroes on their initial bows" before literary audiences. Both writers admired and respected Ralph Ellison, but they gave him a hard time because he wrote so slowly. They felt that *Invisible Man* would remain invisible, given Ellison's stern discipline and dedication to his craft. Once, in 1950, after Ellison told Hughes that he still had not completed the novel, Hughes wrote Bontemps and informed him that thenceforth he would follow Ellison's example. He would forget his contracts and take his time. Bontemps responded:

> The difference between your situation and Ralph's is that Ralph is evidently making this one novel his

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life's work. That's one way to follow a literary career, but it requires a special kind of mentality. When one is producing such a book, the idea is not to finish it till one is tired of living. You, on the other hand, have formed the habit of finishing projects and that is what keeps you going.

When *Commentary* included "The Harlem Ghetto" in its February 1948 issue, Bontemps informed Hughes of "that remarkable piece by the 24-year-old colored kid." He strongly urged Hughes to read it. "What a kid! He has zoomed high among our writers with his first effort. His name is Baldwin." They were, over the years, thoroughly impressed by James Baldwin's prose style, but his literary flaws did not go unnoticed. After reading *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (Baldwin's first novel), Hughes wrote Bontemps: "Baldwin overwrites and over-poeticizes in images way over the heads of the folks supposedly thinking them. . . . It's a low down story in a velvet bag—and a Knopf binding."

Both writers felt that Baldwin was confused on the issue of protest literature. And neither fully understood his famous quarrel with Richard Wright. In light of that quarrel, Bontemps made general comments about literary influence which anticipate those of Harold Bloom's theoretical work *The Anxiety of Influence*. In 1961 he wrote Hughes and discussed "literary falling-outs":

> Sometimes I think they are sort of ritualistic. The young writer makes a pilgrimage, meets the great-name writer, lingers till the spell wears off, then as the final act disagrees or quarrels with his deity and turns away on his own.

The writers were also ever mindful of who published or who refused to publish books and articles by and about Afro-Americans. When the *Saturday Evening Post* unexpectedly published an article by Zora Neale Hurston in September 1942, Bontemps wrote Hughes: " . . . it was a forward step by the Post to let her have a chance. They did, however, spit in the food after serving it up, so to speak, by putting the word *Negro* under her name in the by-line."

They were very serious men, but their letters rarely lack humor. Spending Christmas in Harlem in 1948, Hughes informed Bontemps that his aunt had given him a dog. Bon-

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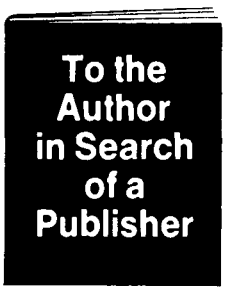

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temps responded, suggesting that Hughes name the dog "Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, T. S. Eliot, or Josephine Baker, if it's a she." Hughes replied:

> We do not need a name for the dog as somebody opened the door the other day and the little hound lit out, turned the corner a thousand miles an hour, headed straight downtown, and was heard to bark as he crossed 110th Street, "No more Niggers!" (He had been raised and trained by whites.)

Their humor is indicative of their magnanimity and deep humanity. When more returns are in, they will show that the two writers, by dint of talent and will, forced open certain literary doors that previously had been closed to Afro-American writers. Thus the example of their lives and art is a priceless legacy. These letters are part of that legacy.

Those who read the mail of writers for curious consolation are often rewarded. They find that the imaginative heads of divine literati usually lie as uneasily as their own dull ones. The gods, they discover, may choose their favorites for the halo of literary genius, but that life is utterly democratic in its capricious deluges of passion, terror, and misfortune. The true gossip, however, is likely to be disappointed by these letters; they are not a catalogue of stormy marriages and intriguing infidelities. One finds, instead, the chronicle of two extraordinary men at work and play. One sees two gentle men of unusual compassion and fortitude. The writers, and indeed their letters, manifest an inviolable faith in the promise of American life. They were certainly socially conscious artists and, as Bontemps predicted, neither left a vast fortune.

In their letters they opened their mouths wide with an eloquent, if mocking, laughter—as if they shared a closely guarded secret. Now the secret is out. They understood their assignment, their calling, better than most of us. During lean days in 1939, Hughes wrote Bontemps and told him to arrange as many lectures as he could so that they could "spread culture" all over the South. He closed the letter by sending a message to Bontemps's wife, Alberta. "Tell her art is long—but lasting! Posterity usually loves it."

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The Reader Replies

Sherlock Holmes and Sociology

It was gratifying to see in your Winter 1980/81 issue that sociology, which lives to lay its delicate hands on everything and everybody, has got round to Sherlock Holmes. But it remains a flaw in that diffident discipline that it lacks the historical sense. Thus your contributor opens her article by imagining Holmes in his Baker Street chambers saying to a visitor "Have a seat." This is as inconceivable as his saying to Watson "I need a fix." Holmes was born a gentleman in 1854 and retired before 1914, and his language is in keeping. It is spare and precise, often ironic and sometimes supercilious, but in the forms of civility he never varied from convention, which is the basis of civility. To guest or client (though not to a policeman) he would say no less than "Pray take a seat" or one of its formal equivalents. Sociologists pray take notice.

JACQUES BARZUN
Charles Scribner's Sons
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Only Yesterday

Kenneth S. Lynn's savage attack on Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* (Autumn 1980) serves chiefly to prove that Professor Lynn did not experience the 1920s. His remarks on Harding and Coolidge cast doubts on his ability as a historian.

He pooh-poohs the "Ohio Gang" and dismisses the corruption of Harding's regime as "the scandalous conduct of a few acquaintances." As Alistair Cooke, for twenty-four years chief American correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and hardly a victim of "Allen's mythmaking," summed it up in 1974: "While the President played poker . . . the lobbyists he had brought from Ohio made money while the going was good. His Attorney General tore up all his bank records when he came to trial. . . ." At least three of Harding's cronies eventually went to jail and two committed suicide.

The smoke-filled room was not a myth: Harding was summoned to a hotel room at 2:00 A.M. to be informed by the dozen or so political bosses there of his probable nomination. And as for the charge that Allen spoke "unfairly of Harding's intelligence," there is the President's own remark that "I don't know anything about this European stuff," and another, "I was a small-time editor and could not grasp I was President of the United States." It was not Allen with "Puritan moral presuppositions," and "the political prejudices of a liberal Democrat" (who's prejudiced now?) that termed Harding "simply a slob," it was that uninhibited Republican, Alice Longworth.

Professor Lynn is probably the first person to discover Coolidge's intellectual interests and "wide ranging curiosity," demonstrated, he says, by the ownership of foreign language grammars—possibly college textbooks thriftily preserved. A president who napped two to four hours a day had little time to study five foreign languages. Certainly he did not approve of wide-ranging curiosity on the part of college women. In a series of articles for *The Delineator* entitled "Enemies of the Republic," the then vice-president referred to Radcliffe as a "Hotbed of Bolshevism," and in horrified italics he quoted a speaker who advocated a United States of the World. At Wellesley he reported there was a professor who was "said to have voted for Debs." In his next installment he quoted the wife of a midwestern professor who said of the instructors, "Do you know they were all Bolsheviks?"

And despite Professor Lynn's preference for Booth Tarkington, Allen had good reason to follow Scott Fitzgerald in his picture of girls of the 1920s. The daughters who "were accustomed to being kissed," were not as Professor Lynn supposes "the rather special daughters" from sophisticated big-city parties—they were also respectable girls from all over, as I well remember. It was a rare girl who did not permit some necking. (It was "girls" in those days, not "college women.")

Percy Marks in *The Plastic Age* pictures college as I remember it with stags carrying hip flasks and couples sneaking out to neck in automobiles. I have a memory of a drunken youth in a dinner jacket leaning over a clubhouse rail and vomiting into the hair of a girl seated below. The 1920 yearbook of my militantly Presbyterian college had an

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item, "Jan. 17. Violets bloom in McKeen," a reference to the night that boys in that dorm had a gangbang with a prostitute named Violet. The yearbook listed those who contracted crabs that night as "Knights of the Crabapple Tree."

Allen and Fitzgerald did not invent the jazz age. One could ask Professor Lynn the question of a former radio comic, "Vas you dere, Scharlie?"

ERNEST EARNEST
Gladwyne, Pennsylvania

KENNETH LYNN replies: It was my intention in writing about *Only Yesterday* to present a balanced assessment of a book that, for all its flaws, I have always admired. Thus I don't know what Mr. Earnest is talking about when he refers to my "savage attack." As for Mr. Earnest's fond conviction that his youthful high jinks represented something new in American life, I am quite sure that nothing I could say would cause him to change his mind.

Victorian Sexuality

Peter Gay's use of Victorian books on sex and marriage (Summer 1980) to argue that our ancestors "had a far more positive view of sexuality than has been supposed" is a refreshing antidote to the clichés perpetuated by Steven Marcus's *The Other Victorians*. But I don't see how he strengthens his case by giving so much attention to *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. This book, published in 1813 according to Professor Gay's bibliography, reveals the kind of sexual attitudes we would expect of an author writing at the height of the Regency period, but the fact that it continued to find many readers after 1837 could just as easily be taken as only another sign of Victorian prurience on a par with the popularity of *My Secret Life*.

What is most interesting about the long extract Professor Gay quotes from *Aristotle's Masterpiece* is the erotic poem he uses as a counterweight to "the myths surrounding Victorian sexuality." This poem is actually a pastiche of verses from "A Rapture" by Thomas Carew, the Cavalier poet. Written in the tradition of Donne's *Elegy XIX*, it was first published in 1640, the year of Carew's death, and was widely admired and imitated by his contemporaries. The verses have been rearranged in *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, slightly reworded, and given new opening and closing couplets, but even in this form they don't deserve Professor Gay's dismissal as "distinctly minor verses." What is significant about this early nineteenth-century revision of Carew's verses is that we have here a bowdlerized version of a very long erotic poem suggesting a conservative trend in sexual attitudes between the early seventeenth century and the supposedly liberal Regency period. For by giving a new opening to the poem ("Now, my fair bride, . . . "), the author of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* has made a celebration of married love out of a poem to his mistress in which Carew actually scorns marital sex in some of the omitted verses:

> No wedlock bonds unwreathe our twisted loves;
> We seek no midnight arbor, no dark groves
> To hide our kisses: there the hated name
> Of husband, wife, lust, modest, chaste, or shame,
> Are vain and empty words, whose very sound
> Was never heard in the Elysian ground.

I don't wish to argue that a closer examination of one part of Professor Gay's evidence undercuts his thesis, only that he might take to heart his own advice that "much more needs to be done by scholars at once liberated from what I have called the Victorian myth and immune to the desire to revise for revision's sake."

PHILLIP HARTH
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Madison, Wisconsin

PETER GAY replies: Mr. Harth is right; I should not have condescended to Carew's verses, even bowdlerized, as "distinctly minor." And he is right, too, that I am not exempt from my invitation to do more scholarly work in the difficult field of nineteenth-century sexuality. I want only to add that the reworking of Carew's erotic poem to which he has called attention strengthens the case I was making: the anonymous author is celebrating sensuality and marriage at the same time; one more bit of evidence that the notorious split between sex and love which, we have long been taught, characterized the Victorians, was far less pronounced than the accepted wisdom has it.

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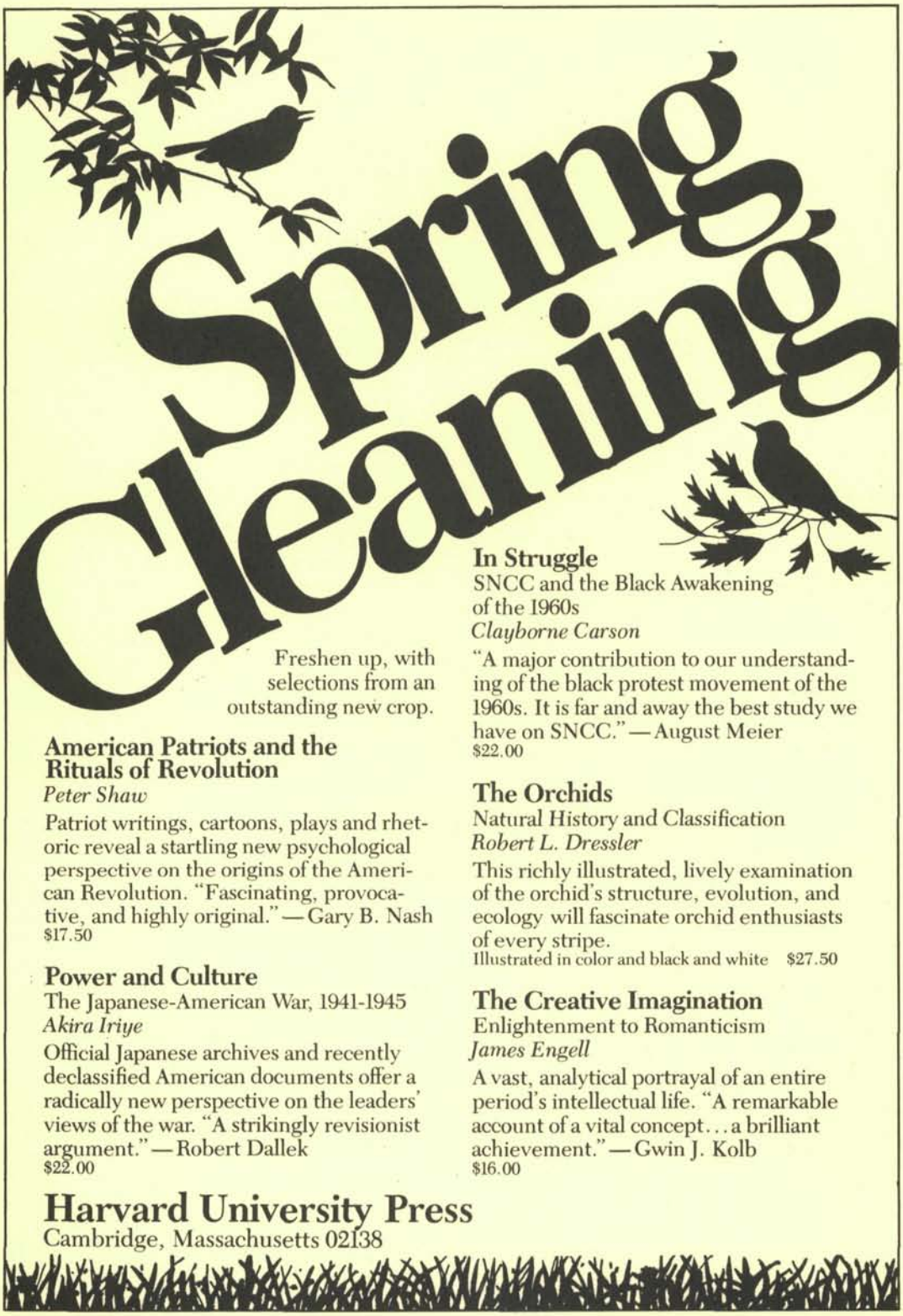

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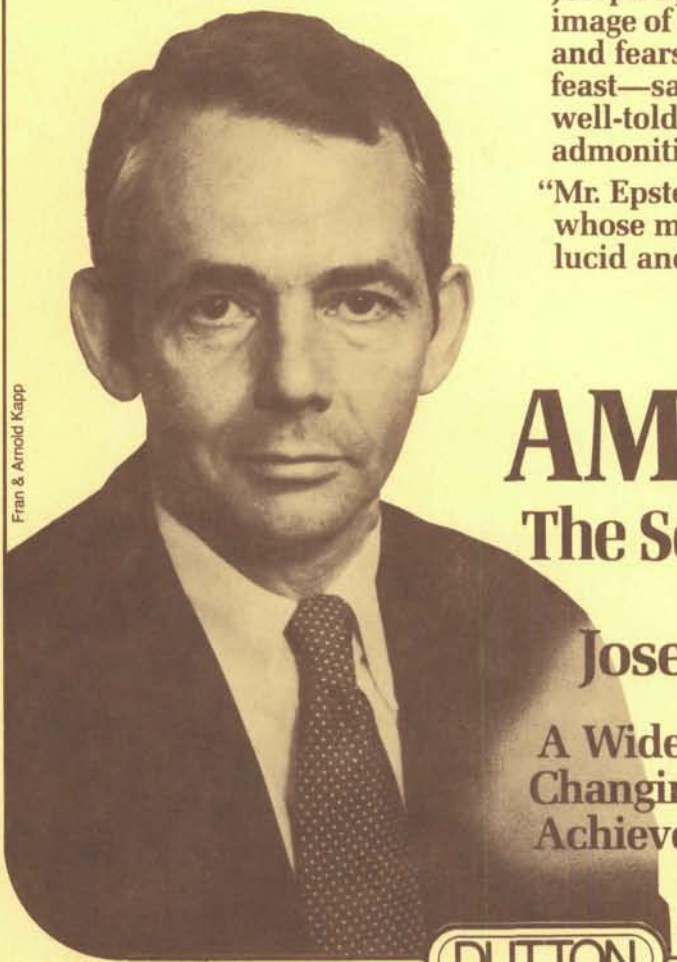

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